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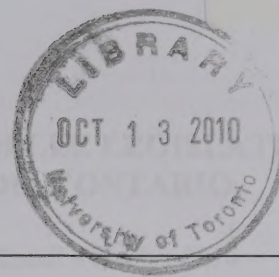
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Monday 4 October 2010

Lundi 4 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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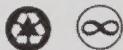
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 octobre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before we begin with the introductions, as you know, we are experiencing unseasonably cold weather. The chamber is cool today, so before anyone starts to complain to the Speaker, yes, the heat will be turned on.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of guests?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I know that 40 seniors are coming from my riding of Mississauga–Erindale. They are not here yet, but they should be here momentarily. I really want to welcome them to the Legislature, and I want to encourage all the members in the Legislature to welcome them as well. They are from the River Grove seniors' club; 40 of them are coming to the Legislature.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome, in the public galleries, grade 10 students from St. Augustine Catholic High School in Markham.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to introduce, in the gallery to my right, Jane and Rick Mederak, who are the grandparents of Caelan Meggs, our page—big Caelan. I think you see him walking around; he's the big guy.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I take great pleasure introducing Mr. Waqar Gilani, a businessman and community leader, owner of Gilani Fine Clothing as well as Society Fashion, and Mr. Ahmad Shabbir of Best Buy Travel. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Today, we will be celebrating 20 years of German unity, and we're inviting all the MPPs to come out front to raise the German flag.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Megan Brian and the member from Essex, we'd like to welcome Sue Brian, Troy Brian and Brock Brian to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Audrey Steele and the member for Sault Ste. Marie, we would like to welcome Wendy Steele, Jim Steele and Evelyn Steele to the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Emily Rempel and the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, we'd like to welcome Kathleen

Rempel, Len Rempel and Greg Rempel to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the public accounts committee of the Parliament of Ghana, led by the Honourable Kwaku Agyeman-Manu. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the Office of the National Assembly of Vietnam, led by the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Nguyen Quang Thanh. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. In 2003, the self-proclaimed education Premier focused on a legacy of improving student test scores. Seven years later, his focus is on banning chocolate milk in schools. Speaker, how did Premier McGuinty get to be so out of touch?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll remind the member that we use titles. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to give credit where credit is due, and that's to our teachers, our parents, our principals and, most importantly, our students, who have really applied themselves. I believe that there has been an awakening, and I'd like to think that we gave birth to at least a little bit of that. Globally, in terms of understanding the single most important thing that we can do, the single most important strategy that we can adopt in terms of strengthening our economy is to invest in our people by continuing to invest in our schools and our colleges and universities and apprenticeship programs and the like. I look forward to dealing with more during the course of the supplementaries.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Policy memo 150 was posted on January 15 of this year. It bans scones and danish, as well as crackers, pretzels, popcorn and chocolate milk. According to the ministry, the policy is still in effect. In the 2005 throne speech, Premier McGuinty promised that 75% of students would meet standardized test requirements. Today, students are studying 16 pages of rules and regulations to avoid being rounded up by the classroom police.

Why does Premier McGuinty think he has a more intelligent understanding of what kids should be eating than their parents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I think that it's very important that we remind everyone in this assembly that our students are doing better in school. Test scores have improved; graduation rates have improved as a direct result of our investment in education. Parents have also told us that they want to be sure that when their children attend school, they can access healthy food, and we very much appreciate the support and input they have provided as we've worked toward that. I'm happy to say that children have been able to access chocolate milk in our schools, and that continues to be the case—in whatever size container they would like to purchase.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier McGuinty is so out of touch. He thinks it's okay for six-year-olds to be talking on their BlackBerrys during sex ed classes as long as they're not drinking chocolate milk.

The education quality assurance office reports year after year that students are not meeting provincial targets, so Premier McGuinty has given up and moved on to other priorities in education. Now he wants teachers to hold bake sales on school property.

Why did Premier McGuinty change his priorities from the priorities of Ontario families?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm going to tell you about a priority of this government. I know that the folks in the opposition are opposed to this, and I know they are going to cancel it, but we are investing in full-day kindergarten. This is something that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As the honourable member knows, we do not interrupt question period with points of order.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The opposition has said that full-day kindergarten is a frill. We believe it is an investment in our future. In fact, families across Ontario have told us that this is something they truly value, and they know that students in our schools will benefit from this investment.

So, while we are committed to doing all we can to support students, and certainly their families, we know that the opposition is not there. We are very, very confident that the investments we have made, the fact that test scores have improved, that we have more students graduating, that parents are confident, when they send their children to school, that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. At one time, Premier McGuinty focused on giving parents more time with their families through a new civic holiday in February.

Today, Premier McGuinty has a "more intelligent understanding" of family time. He's busy telling moms and dads to gather their kids down in the laundry room and do a couple of loads of laundry together on Saturdays.

Premier, how did you get so out of touch with Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague and all members of the Legislature of the good news we put out on Friday. We have closed another four coal plants in the province of Ontario. That's the equivalent of taking two million cars off our roads.

I know that the members of the opposition will be very, very interested in what the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment had to say in this regard. They said that coal-fired plants in Ontario "kill nearly 250 Ontarians and make 120,000 ill each year. They emit cancer-causing chemicals such as arsenic, brain poisons such as lead and mercury, and sulphur dioxide...."

So I know that my honourable colleague will want to join us as we continue to work as hard as we can to shut down coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario, the single largest North American initiative—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier is out of touch; he's out of gas. Had he joined me in Metcalfe this weekend for the 154th annual agricultural fair, he would have heard from people who can't afford his increase in hydro bills. He would have heard from them that they think his trying to tell them to do laundry on Saturdays instead of—spending their time is wrong-headed.

When the Premier used to promise to use technology to improve learning conditions, he meant that "parents will be able to access up-to-date information on class sizes in their school, and across Ontario, through a new class size website." Today he wants teachers and students to text each other with their BlackBerrys in the classroom.

Premier, are your new priorities part of your "more intelligent understanding" because you're bored or because you're out of touch?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is doing a lot of jumping around, but I think we should stay focused on one subject, and I want to return to the issue of electricity.

As my honourable colleague knows very well, because that party, when in government, sat on its hands, did not build significant new generation, did not add significantly to new transmission—their plan was essentially to put in place diesel-fired generators in our urban cores—we were left with the predicament that we inherited. So we're making tremendous efforts to invest in new

generation and new transmission. We're creating a modern, reliable electricity system. More than that, in the interests of parents—mothers in particular, whom we hear from by the score—we are cleaning up the quality of our air.

I would have thought that the member opposite would find it in her heart at some point in time to say, "Yes, we need to work harder as a society to clean up the quality of the air that our children are breathing." That's why we shut down four more coal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There's one thing he is cleaning out, and that's people's wallets. You're taking their money; they can't afford you anymore.

In 2003, Premier McGuinty told Ontario families that he would use technology to improve health care, government services and democratic institutions. That meant eHealth, a one-stop portal through ServiceOntario and looking at voting online. All of those initiatives have failed, so the Premier has moved on to new priorities. Now he's trying to get Justin Bieber to follow him on Twitter.

The question: Does Premier McGuinty think his new priority, in trying to catch Bieber fever, is more important than his old ones, or is it just time for a change?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is thrashing about frantically, and it's not something that you really want to watch very closely.

I want to remind my honourable colleague about something else we're doing today. Today, we're opening the world's largest solar farm in Sarnia, Ontario, and I'm very pleased that the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton will be attending that announcement, in full support of those new jobs and the clean air that this is going to help create for the province of Ontario.

I'm also very pleased that the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk attended our green energy hub announcement, which had been championed so capably by the member for Brant.

I know that there is, at heart, a desire to move ahead with our electricity—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontario families should expect that every single public health care dollar goes into improving front-line care. My question is a simple one: Does the Premier agree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Yes, I do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to the lobbyist registry, at least 14 hospitals have retained lobbyists. Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital paid StrategyCorp \$35,000 for four months of lobbying. The Premier will know StrategyCorp very, very well. His former prin-

cipal secretary is the chairman, and his former director of research is a senior consultant there.

Why is it that Ontario hospitals feel that they have to turn to well-connected McGuinty government insiders to help them get things done?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I want to start by making it as clear as I possibly can that it is not okay to use money that is intended for front-line patient care to lobby the government that makes decisions around funding. There is not a hospital CEO in this province who cannot call me directly. That's part of their job—to make sure that government is understanding what their pressures are. So I am very clear that using taxpayer dollars to lobby for more taxpayer dollars is simply not okay.

That's why we have really moved hard to increase accountability and transparency in the health care system. We have really tightened our policies on the acquisition and use of consulting services. There is greater accountability and greater transparency in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: StrategyCorp was paid \$80,000 by Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital for lobbying, while Brampton's William Osler Health System paid another lobbyist, the Capital Hill Group, \$77,000 last year. Meanwhile, physiotherapy and dietician services were lost at Credit Valley, and operating room and emergency services were cut at William Osler.

Why are precious health care dollars being diverted to insider lobbyists instead of being used for doctors, for nurses and for front-line care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the previous answer, it is not okay with me and it is not okay with our government to use taxpayers' dollars to lobby government—that just doesn't make sense. I am completely supportive of the notion that it is not all right.

1050

We have worked very hard to reduce consulting expenditures in this province. In fact, you might be interested in the record. In 2001-02, the government opposite, when the Conservatives were in power, spent \$656 million on consultants. It is now less than half of that: \$304 million is what was spent on consultants this past year. We are focused on reducing the reliance on consultants, and we are focused on using every dollar we spend on health care to get better care for the people of this province.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, and it's about lobbyists. There are at least 11 more hospitals that have recently retained lobbyists.

Since the McGuinty government refuses to make hospitals subject to freedom-of-information requests, and we're forced to rely on voluntary disclosure, will the Premier shed some light on the matter and reveal how

much money hospitals have wasted on well-connected lobbyists this year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just take the opportunity, through this first question, to restate, affirm and support what the Minister of Health has just said. It is unacceptable in Ontario today for hospital administration to employ lobbyists to try to influence our government. If they want to talk to us, they should pick up the phone. We are available.

I think there is a very strong consensus among all Ontarians that every single dollar that we invest in health care should, as much as possible, be delivered to front-line services; to doctors, nurses, technologies and diagnostics; to getting wait times down; and to building new hospitals. Those are the kinds of things that we believe in in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families contribute tens of billions of dollars every single year so that quality health care will be there and available when they need it. But here's what's happening when we play "follow the cash": Families give their hard-earned money to the government, the government gives it to hospitals, and hospitals give it to lobbyists who then talk to the government for them. All the while, ER wait times are getting longer, and front-line health services are vanishing.

Does this make any sense at all to our Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that, since we were first elected in 2003, has worked very, very hard to increase transparency and to increase accountability. I think the member opposite might be interested in hearing some of the steps we have taken. Cancer Care Ontario was brought under freedom of information in 2010. Publicly funded universities were brought under FIPPA in 2006. Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation were brought back under FIPPA after they were excluded by the Conservatives in 2005. Local public utilities were brought back under FIPPA in 2004.

The Audit Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004, broadened the powers of the Auditor General so that the Auditor General could review public sector organizations such as hospitals. We've implemented the Personal Health Information Privacy Act in 2004, establishing privacy protection—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's how it works: Close advisors to new Premiers leave their jobs and become lobbyists. Then they sell their connections to companies, and now it seems they also sell those connections to publicly funded organizations like hospitals. It's a revolving door that needs to be shut once and for all.

Why won't the Premier put an end to this self-serving insider lobbyist culture by banning hospitals from hiring lobbyists completely?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As both the Premier and I have already said, it is unacceptable for hospitals to hire lobbyists to lobby government. The taxpayers have just

one pocket, and it makes absolutely no sense to use that money for anything other than initiatives that improve patient care.

We have made some tremendous strides forward when it comes to health care in this province. Our wait times are down dramatically. Our access to primary health care is up dramatically. We've invested more in nurses: There are more than 10,000 more nurses working today in this province than when we took office in 2003. We have wrestled with generic drug prices. We have wrestled down brand name drug prices. We have really worked hard to increase the capacity of our health care system. The people of this province know their health care system is far better today than it was in 2003.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Premier. When Premier McGuinty said he would clean up the environment, he said that he would focus on reducing traffic gridlock and diverting 60% of waste from landfills. But Toronto overtook Los Angeles for last place in commuting times, and the Environmental Commissioner reported that the McGuinty Liberals failed to meet their landfill target. Today he's hired 250 dandelion police to crack down on families who defy his weed killer ban.

Premier, did you create this extra red tape and bureaucracy because you were bored, out of gas, out of touch or all of the above?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted for the question. Since our party formed government some seven years ago, we have made the environment a priority. The good people of Ontario know the contrast between the government that they had before and the government they have today, because we are led by what is widely regarded to be the greenest Premier in North America, and I want to thank him for his leadership.

When we went to the people and said that we needed to have a ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides, people gave us a mandate to do that. We've done that today, and I'm pleased to share with the House that scientists now tell us that there's been an 80% reduction of pesticides getting into our water in this province. That's because people are doing the right thing, and I am convinced that the good people of Ontario want to do the right thing. All we have to do is make sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Here's the minister everybody in Ontario's always ready to hear from.

Premier McGuinty also used to promise that Ontario families would get the care they need when they need it. In 2003, that meant hiring more doctors and nurses in the north, reducing patient wait times in overcrowded emergency rooms and adding more MRIs. Today, the number of communities without a GP in the north has grown. The Sudbury hospital strategy to reduce ER wait times is to

stuff patients in a bathroom, and a pregnant dog jumped the queue to get an ultrasound at Peterborough Regional Health Centre, where there's a demonstration today, by the way.

Does Premier McGuinty understand that because he's changed, Ontario families are looking for change?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I just remind the honourable member that his question and his supplementary need to relate. The question was on environment and the supplementary was on health care. I heard no connection between the two, and with that, I'm going to move to the next question.

Interjection: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that we deal with the points of order following question period.

RETIREMENT HOMES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre désignée aux personnes âgées. The Toronto Star exposé on abuse and neglect in retirement homes has shocked Ontarians. Sadly, the Star's finding came as little surprise to me and to dozens of groups who have asked for regulation of the retirement home system and who have been sounding the alarm since the retirement home bill was introduced. The government knew this legislation was deeply flawed, yet in spite of the advice from many groups, which translated into over 100 amendments from the NDP, the McGuinty government voted them down and passed this reckless legislation. Now we see the devastating impact. Will the minister admit that her government made a deadly mistake that needs immediate correction?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I appreciate the question. I have to say that when I read the Toronto Star article, I too was deeply saddened and shocked by what I read. The safety and the well-being of Ontario seniors is an extremely important priority for this government—always has been and always will be. That is why we have a new piece of legislation called the Retirement Homes Act. The Retirement Homes Act is currently in regulations: we are reviewing the regulations, we're putting them together and we're speaking with the experts. In fact, we're going to keep moving forward on this regulation. It is an important piece for Ontario seniors and we're going to keep moving forward.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister has to realize that even once the bill is fully implemented, it won't change anything, because what you have set up is a self-regulated industry with no transparency, no safeguards and no regulation of care.

On May 17, after your government voted down all of the NDP amendments, I told your predecessor, "What we are doing here today is terrible.... The disaster stories, the headlines, will hit us within weeks of this bill becoming law in Ontario." And this is what we're facing today.

The minister has read the headlines; I hope she saw the video. Will the minister commit to reopening this flawed legislation before more seniors suffer from terrible abuse and neglect? It needs to be changed.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The unfortunate fact is that for 20 years, we've been talking about this. This is the government that's finally doing something about it.

What we know—and I hear what the member is saying—is that we have in our grasp the ability to regulate the retirement homes industry. That's what we have. She wants to throw it away. We're not doing that. We're going to move forward, we're going to get this act done, and we're going to hire the right people to manage the regulatory authority.

In fact, an important part of this regulation is that the care and safety standards will be right across the board. So retirement homes will have to adhere to these care and safety standards. It's very important. They include a written policy to promote zero tolerance of abuse and neglect. It includes programs to prevent and control—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the same member, but as Minister of Revenue. October is Small Business Month. As you well know, small business is the lifeline of this province. Small business owners in my community of Mississauga South work hard every day to make a life for themselves and to help the economy flourish. And I know that prior to her work in government, the Minister of Revenue was a small business owner.

While in my riding, I have heard some misinformation regarding the impact of the HST on businesses, particularly small business. Can the minister tell the House what impact the HST is having on small businesses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member from Mississauga South for the question. October is Small Business Month, so I would like to congratulate all those small businesses in our province who are doing such an incredible job.

He's right: I was a small business owner before coming into politics. One thing I remember is, I used to pay the GST all the time and I would get it back, but I would pay the PST and I would never get it back. That would change. And if I was still a small business owner, still selling sauce, I would be able to hire somebody so that they can promote my product even more.

We're doing a lot for small businesses. I'm proud of this government and our HST.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Many small business owners want to focus more on growing their business. Our government's Open Ontario plan helps businesses do just that by cutting red tape and reducing taxes. These efforts are vitally important as small businesses create jobs for

people all across this province. They tell me that such initiatives would improve their competitiveness and productivity.

For example, one of my constituents in the members' gallery owns Fine Clothing Co., a manufacturer and wholesaler of women's wear. Just today, he was telling me how his company has benefited from the reduction in business taxes and the flow-through savings of HST. In fact, this is one of his best years. He has recently expanded to 36 stores in Ontario alone under Gilani Society Fashion, which also means he has been hiring more people; they're now up to 200 on staff.

Can the minister provide more information on how the tax reforms will work for small businesses across this province?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you to the member. What are we doing for small businesses? We are lowering taxes. That's what we're doing for small businesses.

We have a plan called the Open Ontario plan. It's a plan that, within 10 years, will cut taxes and also create 600,000 new jobs for the province of Ontario.

Through the HST, small businesses will now be reimbursed for the provincial tax that they pay on their business inputs. In fact, that will bring their costs down. And to support small businesses, Ontario will also provide \$400 million in transitional assistance.

It's a good time to be a small business owner. Now they're getting it back; they're getting the taxes back. We're very, very proud of this.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier McGuinty has said in the past that he would guarantee seniors would be treated with respect and dignity. Today, it means urine-stained retirement homes that leave unbathed and incapacitated residents stranded for half an hour in dirty bathrooms, lying prone on the floor and sitting in soiled adult diapers for hours. Residents supply their own toilet paper. Meals are hot dogs, macaroni and cheese and cold cuts.

If this is Premier McGuinty's more intelligent understanding of respect and dignity for seniors, could he please explain it to the rest of us?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member for the question and I also thank the Progressive Conservatives for supporting our legislation, because unfortunately not everybody in the House did support this legislation. I hope that their support will continue.

I was very saddened and shocked by the conditions described in the Toronto Star. I want to thank the Star for bringing the attention of all Ontarians to this important issue. The safety and well-being of Ontario's seniors is one of our top priorities, and we will make sure that we help our seniors.

The Retirement Homes Act puts in place many things. One of the things that it does put in place is a standard of

care and safety, and I will speak to it in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Retirement Homes Act does very little. It just scratches the surface of what needs to be done. We need to do a lot better.

In 2008, Premier McGuinty said we must do "a better job of caring for the elderly." Now, the Minister of Health says that worrying about this keeps her up at night. Well, families who wait years and years to get their loved ones into a care facility need answers from this government, not a plea for sympathy.

We in the PC caucus have called for a comprehensive review of seniors' living conditions in these homes. My question to the Premier is, will you agree to such a review?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: What I'd like to say to the member is that what we have is a strong piece of legislation. We are moving forward; we're going to continue moving forward on this.

Part of this legislation is about care and safety standards. It's under the Retirement Homes Act: Every home will be required to comply with standards for each care service offered. The safety standards will include a written policy to promote zero tolerance of abuse and neglect. It's about programs to prevent and control infection, staff screening and training, and requirements for a safety plan. The regulatory authority will conduct inspections and investigations to enforce compliance with care and safety standards.

We have never legislated retirement homes. We're doing that now with this strong piece of legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Five NDP caucus members, including myself, are supporting the Put Food in the Budget campaign and will live on one bag of food-bank food for the week. We are doing this to understand the hardship faced by thousands of Ontarians who have to survive on social assistance rates as low as \$2 a day. Even government members agree that rates are inadequate.

Will the Premier join us this week and live on a food-bank diet to better understand the utter inadequacy of social assistance rates in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to stand and speak to this issue and I was pleased to stand beside my Premier last week as we launched the campaign at Daily Bread Food Bank for their Thanksgiving food drive. I congratulate the Daily Bread Food Bank, which has worked in my home community for many, many years.

We're absolutely committed to combating poverty in Ontario. We thank all the community partners, the poverty reduction advocates and everyone who continues to

raise issues. I've had an opportunity myself to go on to the Do the Math website. What I say to the member opposite is that it highlights the need for the work that our government has been doing already through our poverty reduction strategy.

We took a bold step. We introduced the poverty reduction strategy, where we outlined a plan to reduce the number of kids living in poverty by 25% by 2013. We have a plan and the plan is working despite these tough economic times and despite the lack of support from the—

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had asked the Premier whether he'd go on the diet. Perhaps the minister can answer that, too.

Social assistance rates have fallen by about 30% since 1994. Recipients are forced to rely on food bank handouts to try to get through the month, yet the McGuinty government refuses to acknowledge that it is impossible to live a healthy life on their inadequate social assistance rates. The government provides a child benefit, but cuts the special diet allowance and claws back basic assistance so recipients are never, never better off.

Why won't this minister, this Premier and the cabinet join me and my colleagues and live on a welfare diet for just one week?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: On this side of the House, we're about taking positive action steps to help Ontarians living in poverty. On the opposite side of the House, they're a lot of talk.

We accelerated the phase-in of the OCB two full years ahead of schedule and they voted against it. We introduced full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds. We've ensured tax fairness for low-income families, removing 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls, and they voted against it. They voted against our six increases to social assistance rates. They voted against our creation of 22,000 new affordable child care spaces. They voted against stabilizing the rent bank. They voted against raising the minimum wage. They voted against 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls.

We're taking positive steps. We have a strong plan. We're committed to reducing child poverty in this province. We take steps every day, and we'd like to see actual support from the party opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TORONTO WATERFRONT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. The Toronto waterfront has long been an eyesore in our province's capital. Many of the factories that once employed thousands of Torontonians on the Toronto waterfront have closed and new communities and employers didn't spring up overnight to take their place. Over the summer, though, I noticed that there was

a lot of work underway on the Toronto waterfront. For example, at the foot of Sherbourne and Lower Jarvis, construction work is sometimes an eyesore too, but I trust it's also a sign of better things to come.

Now, I know the government has committed \$500 million in funding to the waterfront revitalization initiative. My question to the minister is as follows: What has been accomplished with this money so far?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Toronto waterfront initiative is a giant step towards making Toronto a more livable city. With our federal and municipal partners, it is the largest urban development project in North America.

The construction the member has noticed is on the East Bayfront, which is now under development. The parking lot at Lower Jarvis has become the beautiful Canada's Sugar Beach. Under construction nearby is George Brown College's health sciences centre. Also nearby, Sherbourne Common is the first park in Canada to integrate an ultraviolet stormwater treatment system into its design.

These projects on the East Bayfront are improving Torontonians' quality of life and making the city's new blue edge a great place to live, work and play.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: It's great to see the Toronto waterfront being transformed after being underutilized for such a long time. Since I am an enthusiastic bicyclist, I'm personally excited by these projects at Sugar Beach and the park at the East Bayfront.

Now, I know that many of my constituents will work on the revitalized waterfront and will enjoy visiting it—just like we are here. Surely, though, the projects you mentioned cannot account for the \$500 million the government has dedicated to this renewal project. So, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what other work is under way that we should know about?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In the West Don Lands, Waterfront Toronto is cleaning up a polluted brownfield and replacing it with a vibrant new community in the heart of the city. The Don River Park, plus more than 1,000 units of housing, including 240 units of affordable housing, are already under construction. This is smart growth, a better alternative to urban sprawl. Better yet, the West Don Lands are particularly exciting because they will be home to the Pan Am Games' athletes' village in 2015.

There has also been progress on the central waterfront; for example, the opening of the wave decks that have already captured the imagination of so many Torontonians and tourists. I urge all members to visit the waterfront and see the tremendous transformation that's taking place, improving the quality of life for Torontonians for decades to come.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. About five months ago, the minister attended a local council meeting in Wellington county to discuss the Green Energy Act, including the approvals process for wind farm proposals. There, according to two

published reports in two local community papers—the Wellington Advertiser and the Drayton Community News, in their May 21 editions—he stated that if municipalities refused to sign off on the wind applications, the applications would not be approved.

Now that he's the Minister of the Environment, the head of the ministry which reviews the wind farm applications, is he prepared to repeat the same statement in the House this morning?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We are in the process, of course, of eliminating dirty coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario—the first in North America. We are making investments in green renewable energy across this province and leading North America in that regard.

For a project in regard to wind development to be approved by the Ministry of the Environment, it needs to have received the approval for a renewable energy approval. That is new in the province of Ontario and was contained in the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that we passed in this House. One of the requirements is that a proponent must submit a complete application, and that includes a review and a consultation with the municipality, a schedule that is attached to that application. We will, of course, look at any approval which is complete. We will not look at—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Clearly, the minister was saying something different five months ago than he's saying today in this House.

The truth is, this government's Green Energy Act has stripped municipal councils of their local decision-making authority, pitted neighbour against neighbour in rural Ontario, and created legitimate questions about the long-term cost of electricity even as hydro bills are skyrocketing today. Here we have a minister of the crown, at a public meeting in his riding, stating that municipalities have a de facto veto over wind farm applications.

The minister led his constituents to believe that municipal councils can stop the wind farms from being built. Will he now admit and acknowledge that he was wrong to do so?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'll try to answer the question out of respect for my colleague; we share Wellington county.

I'll say yet again: For a wind turbine project to be approved in the province of Ontario by the Ministry of the Environment, the proponent must submit a complete application. That is the law. Under the law, one of the requirements is that the municipality has to be consulted. There also have to be public consultations. As well, in the consultations, it is important that the municipality has to complete a schedule that says that all of the issues in regard to the municipality have been addressed.

I'll say yet again: There will not be an approval of a renewable energy approval in this province of Ontario unless an application is complete. The requirements in regard to the municipalities are very clear, and those standards must be met in the province of Ontario.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On Friday, US Steel announced that it was shutting down its Hamilton blast furnaces indefinitely. This follows the closure of the blast furnace that took place for much of 2009.

US Steel has not hesitated to take assistance from the people of this province. When will this government finally show a little backbone and stand up for the families who are taking a hit?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I want to say at the outset that, first and foremost, we feel for the workers and their families who have been affected by this terrible development. I know that the Minister of Economic Development was, in fact, working with the company involved to see if there's anything at all that we might be able to do together.

We have found ways in the past, I am proud to say, to work with the city of Hamilton and the people of Hamilton. We will continue to look for opportunities in the future.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is the second US Steel shutdown in just two years. Starting and stopping a blast furnace takes years off of its lifespan—they're made to run non-stop—and all of this for a company that accepted \$150 million from the Ontario government in 2006 and made job commitments to the federal government that it admits it has not honoured.

When will the government finally say no to the bullying tactics of this arrogant multinational corporation—in fact, all multinational corporations—and stand up for Ontario workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to say that, again, our responsibility today is to work with those who have lost their jobs, should that prove, in fact, to be the final decision that the company makes. We have not given up entirely in that scope. Should that be the case, then we will work with them to provide them with training opportunities.

I also want to say, again, that I want to confirm our continuing commitment to the people of Hamilton generally. We've been there in the past. We partnered with ArcelorMittal Dofasco to upgrade their steel production process. We're very excited about the opportunities both in jobs and the long-term legacy projects we'll put in place through the Pan Am Games. We're talking millions and millions of dollars in new sporting infrastructure.

But beyond that, this is not a good day for those families. We understand that, we regret that and we'll continue to look for ways to work with the people of Hamilton and help them build a brighter future.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We all know how important

it is to maintain our health, but we often forget that bad oral health can play a big part in one's overall health through such conditions as gum disease and cavities. These problems may also exacerbate serious conditions such as diabetes and respiratory diseases. Untreated cavities can also be painful and lead to serious infections.

It is so important for our kids to learn early to maintain their oral health so that they will live healthy lives well into adulthood. Dental work is often expensive and not always the number one priority for low-income families that are struggling to make ends meet.

Could the minister please tell this House what this government is doing to help our vulnerable children get access to important dental care early in life?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham, who certainly has a deep understanding of public health issues.

Last week, I was very happy to launch a new program in this province called Healthy Smiles Ontario. It means that eligible children aged 17 and under will have access to comprehensive dental care. One hundred and thirty thousand kids throughout this province will benefit from healthy smiles. These kids will have access to regular checkups. They'll be able to get X-rays and cleanings, and they'll be able to get cavities filled before they become a serious problem for these kids.

There are a lot of parents out there who are struggling to make ends meet and to provide the best care possible for their kids. Healthy Smiles Ontario is going to help them. It means that kids will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The Healthy Smiles program focuses on children and youth. I've been getting questions from my constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham who want to know how this program fits into our province's poverty reduction strategy, which is concerned with reducing the number of children and youth living in poverty by 25% in five years. Can you please tell this House and my constituents how this program helps us achieve our goal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to speak about how this Healthy Smiles program fits within a comprehensive strategy on poverty reduction.

I was pleased to stand at LAMP Community Health Centre last week and make another announcement about this program. On that day, we met a little boy named Luka, who was in for emergency dental care. With the Healthy Smiles program, Luka's mom would be able to have him come in for preventive care—cleaning, treatment—so that he would be able to have that care before it was an emergency.

This program builds upon the \$1,100 per child of the OCB, the \$63.5-million investment in child care and the 520,000 kids who now get a healthy breakfast or a healthy snack. All of these pieces are part of our compre-

hensive strategy to reduce child poverty in this province. This is another important move to help families be able to help their kids so that they can have the best possible outcomes for their kids, which is exactly what they want.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Premier. Sue Lambier of Sarnia has provided daily support for her son Michael for the past 20 years. Michael has cystic fibrosis and has no control of his arms and legs. He needs help with all his daily needs.

Sue was hospitalized last year and because she has no supports for Michael, he was hospitalized as well—for three months. Premier, this is no way for Sue and Michael to live. One hundred and eight people are currently on a wait-list for residential services in Lambton county. When can Sue Lambier expect your government to provide services for her family?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this issue. I simply want to say that helping families who are in these circumstances is something that's of critical importance to the Minister of Community and Social Services. As a mother myself, I can appreciate the challenges that exist for this family. We don't underestimate for a moment the issues that are being raised here, and I'd be happy to raise them with the Minister of Community and Social Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: We don't get to choose which questions we answer. That was a Comsoc ministry question. I want to redirect it back to the Premier.

Sue Lambier doesn't want to know what you haven't done. She wants to know what you will do. In Sarnia–Lambton there are 470 families waiting for supports. Backtracking on your promise to increase 2% to service agencies will mean even more in reduced services.

Sue has been turned down for both Passport funding and is waiting for residential support. Just so the Minister of Children and Youth knows, that's Comsoc too.

Minister, when are you going to start helping families like Sue Lambier's? She just wants to ensure her son is taken care of when she is no longer able to.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As any parent knows, a child is a child is a child, no matter what their age. We are proud on this side of the House to stand side by side with families responding to challenging circumstances. I'm very proud on this side of the House that, since 2003-04, we have committed almost \$176 million in new funding to help over 2,700 adults with developmental disabilities. That's why our government initiated the Passport program and invested \$31 million to help 2,500 young adults make the transition.

Some \$99 million was invested in special services at home. We know that challenges for families across this province are very serious. That's why myself, the Minis-

ter of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Health and everyone on this side of the House works in partnership to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mrs. S is a senior from Fort Frances and she currently has a respite care bed at Rainycrest Home for the Aged in Fort Frances. Two weeks ago, she received a letter from the North West Community Care Access Centre, telling her that a long-term-care bed is open to her in Terrace Bay. Terrace Bay is 550 kilometres, or seven hours, away from Fort Frances where her family and friends reside.

My question is this: Is this the McGuinty Liberals' idea of quality long-term care for Ontario seniors? Send them 550 kilometres—seven hours—away from their family and friends?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course not. What I will do is undertake to look into this particular case. I do recall that some time ago the member opposite brought forward a case. When we actually looked into it, we discovered that the story was slightly different. So what I will do is undertake again to look into this particular case.

1130

But of course, people who are in long-term care need to be close to the people who love them—their family members, their friends, their community. So I will undertake to look at this particular case.

As we are working to build capacity in long-term care, as we are looking to strengthen community supports so that people don't have to go into long-term care, our focus is very much on services for the frailest and the seniors in our community. We will continue with that work and, as I say, I will happily look into this particular case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The reality of this comes down to the government saying, "This isn't happening," but people continue to get these letters. People continue to be told, "If you want a long-term-care bed, you go 300 kilometres, you go 550 kilometres."

The McGuinty government tells one story here in question period, but then when seniors are desperate they get quite another message from officialdom.

I simply want to ask the minister this—550 kilometres is the same as the distance from Toronto to Montreal. I don't think the minister would tell people in Toronto, "If you want a long-term-care bed, go to Montreal." I don't think you would. The really sad part is, the local district service board has put forward a number of proposals for supportive housing, but the North West LHIN and the North West Community Care Access Centre—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Actually, I completely agree with the member. It is not okay that a person who's in a long-term-care home should be asked to move far away from friends and family. I will undertake to look into this particular situation.

We have a plan when it comes to long-term care and we are acting on that plan. We have opened over 8,000 new long-term-care beds. Just on the weekend, we opened a new long-term-care home in my community of London. We have plans to open almost 1,700 more beds across the province going forward. When it comes to long-term care, we have made enormous investments. We are spending now over \$1 billion more than when we were elected.

We know there's more work to do and we have a plan to get that work done. The member opposite has no plan when it comes to long-term care and, in fact, the initiatives that they are proposing would actually hurt the people who they are pretending to stand up for.

TOURISM

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Minister, over the summer I had the opportunity to attend several festivals in Guelph. Festivals and events are great ways to attract tourists while showcasing what our community has to offer. Several weekends ago, I was able to participate in the Guelph Jazz Festival, which, along with the Hillside Festival in Guelph, has greatly appreciated the support Celebrate Ontario has provided to them. The Celebrate Ontario funding has enabled both festivals to draw in audiences from a wider market and encourage tourism to my riding.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what is this government doing to foster and promote festivals and events across this province for all Ontarians to enjoy?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Guelph for her question.

Investment in our hundreds of festivals and events across the province are, needless to say, very important. Festivals and events like the Guelph Jazz Festival are a key part of the tourism industry. They are powerful economic drivers for many communities across the province. They attract visitors from near and far, filling our hotel rooms and our local restaurants and stimulating our economy. This is why I am so proud that this year, our government is investing \$20 million to support festivals across Ontario through our Celebrate Ontario plan come 2011.

Celebrate Ontario 2011 supports the promise of the Open Ontario plan to strengthen our economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: This Celebrate Ontario program is vital to the existence of small, local festivals. I understand that the program helps festivals to offer new activities, reach new audiences and generate more economic activity in their communities. For example, the Guelph Jazz Festival was able to create a new Nuit Blanche event

using the Celebrate Ontario funding this year, a very important component to ensuring that visitors and residents have new reasons to travel across our great province each year.

In our community, we have a number of festivals that vary significantly in size, audience and capacity. Some have approached my constituency office regarding funding for the upcoming year. Would all festivals be eligible for Celebrate Ontario 2011, and where can my constituents get—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. This year, our government launched an enhanced Celebrate Ontario program to increase the size, the reach and the impact of festivals and events across the province. I would like to encourage those interested to visit our website, www.ontario.ca/celebrateontario, for more details. The website is very informative, providing application guidelines, contact information for regional advisers and answers to frequently asked questions, among many other things.

Since 2007, this government has invested over \$37 million—let me repeat: \$37 million—to support over 500 festivals across Ontario, and we look forward to seeing that number increase come 2011.

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

In Ontario today, there are many Ontarians who lack the basic literacy, numeracy and essential skills to get a job. These are necessary if we are to have a thriving economy.

I ask you today, Minister: Are you prepared to continue to make permanent the \$45 million for literacy services and training which ends with your 2010-11 fiscal year, or are you going to allow these people to not receive funding and go back to funding for the 1997 levels?

Hon. John Milloy: I welcome the question from my colleague, and I suspect what may have prompted it is the presence of the Ontario Literacy Coalition here at Queen's Park. I know that members on all sides of the House want to welcome them here to Queen's Park and congratulate them for their good work.

I've been very proud of the additional \$90 million that our government has invested in literacy programming over the last two years, which has allowed 13,000 more learners to come forward. The honourable member is aware that part of that funding came from the federal government, and we continue to call on Ottawa to maintain funding as we still struggle with the outcome of the recession.

As minister, I want to very publicly pledge that we're going to continue to work with groups like the Ontario Literacy Coalition to make sure that they have the resources they need to continue their excellent work.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, to a question from the member from Thornhill—the question was directed at the Premier. I'm just going to read the opening part of the first part of the question: "When Premier McGuinty said he would clean up the environment, he said that he would focus on reducing traffic gridlock"—transportation—"and diverting 60% of waste from landfills"—the environment.

The member from Thornhill was asking a question directly to the Premier, and the point of the question was to act as an indictment on the record of this Premier and his government. It was directed to the Premier. In the supplementary, in keeping completely with the tone of the question, he spoke then of questions more pertinent to the failures of the McGuinty government in the health ministry.

Speaker, at the end of the question, you ruled it out of order and told the Premier he didn't have to answer that question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton will withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, my request to you is that—I would ask you to review that decision on your part and to rule that, in fact, the question was in order and that subsequent questions of that nature should be considered to be in order as well.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland on the same point of order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: If I may, and I'm very mindful of standing order 38(a), as I join this commentary, but I suggest that we need your assistance. The Speaker has a very difficult job, especially during question period, when the process is rapid fire and the Speaker has to make judgment calls promptly. We respect that and we understand. As a matter of fact, we encourage the Speaker to make those judgment calls.

However, I think my concern—and I make reference to 37(c), which is of course the rule regarding supplementary questions. You'll note, because I've referred also to the federal standing orders—interestingly, their rule concerning questions is the same as ours, standing order 37, but they have no parallel to 37(c). In other words, the standing orders of the federal Parliament do not regulate supplementary questions. So the regulation of supplementary questions has developed through common law, if you will: Speakers' rulings.

I refer to Bosc and O'Brien, in particular pages 506-507:

"Members may seek to clarify the answer to a question or solicit further information through the use of supplementary questions....

"In the past, Speakers have used their discretion to insist that a supplementary question be on the same subject

and as a general rule be asked of the same minister.” That’s the same-subject rule and the same-minister rule.

But then, further—and again, this isn’t pursuant to federal standing orders, this is the common law developed in the federal Parliament: “As a supplementary question is meant to flow from or be based upon the information given to the House in the response of the minister or parliamentary secretary to the initial or preceding question”—that is, in some respects, what’s codified in 37(c), which is that the supplementary question must arise out of the minister’s reply to an oral question, which is somewhat narrower than the broader federal common law rule about the same minister and “be related to.”

Why I rise, Sir, is not to question your ruling in any way, shape or form, but I rise because you’ve heard me so many times call upon you to apply standing order 37 in its entirety in a far more rigorous manner, in a far more rigid manner. With respect, I think it would be helpful to all of us that if 37—especially 37(a), as well as 37(c), the standing order subsection that relates to supplementaries—were applied rigorously, we’d all be in a better position; we’d all be more disciplined about the questions we ask. It would ensure that the questions asked, not only by opposition members but by government backbenchers, be of a public interest and be urgent matters—because that’s the standard—that there not be debate in the course of asking a question, and that there not be lengthy preambles and no information other than what is necessary to make the question relevant or meaningful.

So, with respect, I submit to you that if we had a more rigid application across the board of 37(a) and 37(c), then all of us would be in a better position to comply with those standing orders, we’d have a more disciplined question period, and there would be fewer grey areas about which we have these little—this a minute controversy; the world will not end as a result of the Speaker’s ruling today. But we’ll avoid these types of conflicts by knowing what the rules are and knowing that they’re going to be applied rigidly, rigorously and firmly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would note that the member from Welland did refer to 38(a), that “the Speaker’s rulings relating to oral questions are not debatable,” and having given a polite nod to 38(a), he went on to debate the issue, which he’s wont to do. He’s had, actually, a hankering to debate 37(a) for quite some time, so we appreciate your input on 37(a), which is completely irrelevant to the point of order made by the House leader for the official opposition. But we appreciate the input.

The official opposition House leader has raised a question about a supplementary question that was placed earlier today. I would note that the answer to the concern raised by the House leader for the official opposition is in 37(c): “In the discretion of the Speaker, a reasonable number of supplementary questions arising out of the minister’s reply to an oral question may be asked by any members.” So it would have to stem from the minister’s

reply. In this case, the member for Thornhill asked a question dealing with the environment. The response was on the environment. He then got up and asked a supplementary dealing simply with health, which has nothing to do with the initial question nor with the reply—

Interjections.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we gave the opposition the courtesy of listening to their submissions on this point of order, and I would respectfully request that they do the same.

Standing order 37(c) is very clear: The supplementary has to stem from the minister’s reply. In this case, the question did not in any way stem from the minister’s reply nor to the original question, and I believe your ruling in this case was appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This is a serious issue, and I want to thank the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Welland and the government House leader for their comments.

I think everyone in the chamber knows that the Speaker does try to be as lenient as possible when it comes to question period. The general rule—there were some comments made by the member from Welland on the general rule being applied and interpreted by many Speakers—is clear: The supplementary question should not only have a connection to the original question, but should also flow from that question that was provided.

I did listen today very carefully, as I endeavour to do every day—to listen carefully—to both the member’s original question and the response, and the supplementary as well. I heard the original question and I heard the answer, and the ultimate question—not the preamble—in my mind related to environmental policy. As I listened to the answer and then to the supplementary question, the focus changed to health policy. Yes, there may have been comments in the preamble to the question, but the question itself, in my mind, related to health policy. The challenge for the Speaker in that situation is to discern a connection between the two. To be in order, a supplementary question has to have some relevance to the main question and flow from the response.

As I said, I do attempt to give as much leeway as possible. I will comment on this aspect of standing order 37. I—and we’ve talked about this before—have read a great deal of Hansard. I have read Hansard from when the NDP was in government, I have read Hansard from when the Conservatives were in government, I have read Hansard with the current Liberal government and previous Liberal governments, and I can tell you that every Speaker has been challenged with government questions. I can read you rulings that you may think were coming from an opposition member today, and it’s actually comments that a government member sitting in this House today has made. I think all members have had frustrations with government questions, as do I. There were a couple of occasions today where they brought it back but, again, this is the challenge of dealing with some of the pre-

amble. The preamble starts to go all over the board, and then it comes back to a question.

I would just ask all members to be cognizant when they are drafting their questions that they also make sure that they are listening very clearly to the responses that come from the minister. But I also lay down the challenge, particularly to the government side, to keep in mind standing order 37, and I will endeavour to do my best.

I took exception to a comment that was made earlier. I am very cognizant of the role that the Speaker plays in doing so in an unbiased manner. I have endeavoured to do that for the past three years, and I can assure you that as long as I continue as Speaker, I will be doing so in an unbiased manner.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I too would like to seek your assistance. Earlier today, in response to a question by the member from Whitby—Oshawa, the education minister—while I'm delighted she suggested we would form government—knowingly indicated in this House something that was not true. I would ask that you ask her to withdraw that incorrect information.

In the future, I think that there's a role for you to play, if I might say so, humbly, to ensure that ministers don't erroneously or intentionally mislead this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for her point of order. It is again another challenge for the Speaker to deal with the veracity of comments that may be made in the cut and thrust of question period, but also for the Speaker to deal with the factual correctness of comments that do get made in this House. I would just remind all members that they should endeavour that, to the best of their ability and to the best of their knowledge, they are ensuring that comments that are made in this House are factual.

If the honourable minister in question feels that a withdrawal should be made, I certainly would welcome that.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm seeking your assistance on an issue that came up today in question period. The member from Kenora—Rainy River asked me a question regarding a constituent who was being told to move from Fort Frances to a long-term-care home in Terrace Bay. The member did provide me with the letter that this constituent received, and indeed, it has nothing—it absolutely does not make that suggestion. If I may, it's a very short letter. The letter reads—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My response to the minister is going to be the same as my response to the member from Nepean—Carleton. I trust that all members, in either formulating a question, formulating an answer, or in response or in comment made during debate in this House, are going to ensure that information is of a factual nature. I trust that all members are going to do so. For me to have detailed, minute knowledge of every issue going on in the province is not possible.

I would just remind all members that at any time that they're coming before this House, the information should be based on good, solid facts.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Beaches—East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Wellington—Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I am very delighted to introduce to the Legislature on this 20th anniversary of German unity a number of German presidents of associations and the consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany, Sabine Sparwasser. She's here with us today. The president of the German World Congress, Karl Ruppert, is here with us. So is Mr. Frank Danner from the Hansa club from Brampton and the president of the Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada, Mr. Chris Klein. And there are some others. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to acknowledge National Mental Health Week.

I asked to be a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions because I knew that people in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon were struggling to get mental health assessments, let alone treatments, and they were finding closed doors and long wait-lists.

Mental health and addiction issues are the second-leading cause of disability and premature death in Canadians. It is a serious health issue that receives little recognition or attention. That is why in our report we presented 23 recommendations based on consensus that we believe can move Ontario in the right direction. I was pleased to see that the committee's report received overwhelming support from the mental health and addiction organizations across the province the same day it was released.

I would like to thank the Ontario division of the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addictions Programs and the Ontario Peer Development Initiative for supporting the work of our committee.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the many individuals, volunteers and organizations in Ontario who are doing excellent work in the field of mental health.

I also want to continue working with all members of the provincial Parliament to implement the select committee's work. I encourage you to continue the dialogue about mental health and addictions in our community.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mr. Charles Sousa: It was another spectacular summer on Mississauga's waterfront. Every year, south Mississauga celebrates the warm weather with a number of outstanding festivals.

The Mississauga Waterfront Festival kicked off the season in mid-June with live music and entertainment for the whole family. The festival also gives back to the community through its Sponsor a Child program. This year, the organization gave free admission to over 5,000 children from deserving families.

On Canada Day, thousands gathered to celebrate Paint the Town Red at the Port Credit Memorial Park on the shores of the Credit River. The party featured an extraordinary Lakeshore Road parade, followed by a street-sized cake-cutting and a spectacular fireworks display to top off the evening.

This year's many events were made all the more special as it also marks the 175th anniversary of the village of Port Credit. As part of the anniversary, a number of heritage and garden displays have been featured, a time capsule was prepared, theme songs were written and fabulous art competitions continue.

On July 24, our team was proud to host a community barbecue at the Port Credit Harbour Marina. Despite the rain, over 2000 people came out to enjoy delicious halal foods, cotton candy, live bands, face painting and carnival rides for the kids.

In August, the Port Credit BIA's Busker Fest was back on the village streets. Performers came from all over the world to entertain and amaze the community.

To finish off the summer with a big bang, the waterfront hosted the 12th annual Southside Shuffle Blues and Jazz Festival. This year, I'm pleased to say that the festival received a \$75,000 grant from Celebrate Ontario. These funds help attract visitors from all across Canada and the United States to Mississauga's beautiful lakeside villages.

Of course, these events don't just happen on their own. They are the result of countless hours of hard work by organizers and volunteers, and the generous support of sponsors. To all who made these tremendous events possible, thank you. We look forward to seeing you all on Mississauga's waterfront again next year.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John O'Toole: Today, in Peterborough, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre staff and citizens are demonstrating that they've had enough of the attack on their health care system by the McGuinty government, as well as the wasteful LHINs. Hundreds of protestors are converging on the Peterborough Regional Health Centre to show their anger and frustration at the continued cuts and lack of support from their MPP, Jeff Leal.

People in Peterborough are waiting longer for care in hospitals, in long-term care and, indeed, in their homes. All the while, Peterborough residents are putting up signs all over town asking their MPP to stand up for them.

Recently, our leader, Tim Hudak, and I met with professionals from Peterborough. They warned that they are seeing the beginning of a silver tsunami in terms of care for the aging population, whether it's ALC patients in hospitals, retirement homes, long-term-care homes and the rest.

Peterborough is just one example of the failure of the McGuinty government to plan for the future, not just of our aging population but of the health care system generally.

It is crystal clear that the McGuinty Liberals are out of touch with the citizens, not just of Peterborough but indeed of the province of Ontario. We call on Premier McGuinty and his health minister to stay tuned and pay attention to the seniors. We saw in question period this morning the same issues raised by all parties in the opposition.

Stand up for the people. Stand up for the seniors in this province.

DURHAM REGION 211

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: This past Thursday I had the pleasure of attending the official launch of the 211 phone services in Durham region. This is a phone number much the same as 911 or 411, except that it is a service that recognizes some social barriers and is available to anyone needing access to social services in their community, such as language support, mobility, isolation and other needs.

The 211 service is funded by the United Way, with help from various levels of government. Recognizing the benefits of 211, the provincial government invested \$13 million over four years to expand 211 to the entire province by March 2012. By the end of September, the number of Ontario residents with access to 211 will surpass 8.5 million, or 70% of the population, according to Ontario's 211 services.

Calls are answered by live operators 24 hours a day, seven days a week, who access each caller's needs and link them to the best available services and programs. The 211 service helps individuals find services and understand access requirements for programs like employment counselling, housing assistance, services for

seniors, home support, legal assistance, child care and language classes.

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In 2002, United Way of Canada and other partners won approval from the CRTC to use 211 for community, social, government and health information in Canada. The 211 service is changing the way Ontarians access information. Instead of annoying phone menus or impersonal automated attendants, 211 callers speak directly to a certified information and referral specialist. By combining the human touch of live answer with modern phone and web technology, 211 is able to provide callers with award-winning, high-quality services.

The 211 service is another valuable tool that is available to all residents, and I fully support the 211 initiatives in Durham region and in all of Ontario.

HMCS HAIDA

Mr. Ted Arnott: This year, the Royal Canadian Navy proudly celebrates its 100th anniversary. With Remembrance Day just a month away, my family and I yesterday visited one of our national historic sites, the HMCS Haida.

The Haida, a tribal class destroyer, was commissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy in 1943, operating throughout the remainder of the Second World War. Following a post-war refit, the Haida continued in service through the Korean War and the Cold War until her decommissioning in 1963. Today, the Haida is stationed at Pier 9 in Hamilton harbour.

Our October 3 visit was a fascinating journey through our nation's history, made even more enlightening thanks to Ray Pearce, who accompanied us. Ray, having served on the Haida in the late 1950s, offered his compelling first-hand account of life aboard this Canadian warship. Ray Pearce continues to serve today as president of the Fergus Legion.

My late father-in-law, Ted McCabe, served in the Royal Canadian Navy during World War II. His story, like that of Mr. Pearce, was one of youthful courage, achievement and service to country.

I want to thank Ray Pearce for taking us on the tour of the Haida, for his continued leadership at the Legion, and all other Legion members for their important work. Through their service, they remind us of those who travelled to distant lands, far from their families, on our behalf—and, indeed, of those who do so again today.

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In September, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Education on behalf of some of the existing child care centres in my riding, child care centres very concerned about the future. They and the parents that support them support the idea of full-day daycare, but are concerned that, at present, the way Bill 242 and full-day daycare are being rolled out, we could see an end to many a non-profit daycare centre in Ontario. They're

nervous about what will happen after the transition period for the use of third party providers expires. Many of the centres fear that this will result in the demise and downfall of non-profit child- and family-centred daycare throughout Ontario.

Parents, children and daycare providers across Ontario need to know what the plan is going to be and what funds are going to be allocated to make sure that we have daycare provided throughout this province for many years to come. That answer needs to come quickly.

HISTOIRE FRANCO-ONTARIENNE

M. Phil McNeely: Le 24 septembre, j'ai eu le privilège d'assister aux célébrations soulignant la francophonie en Ontario. J'ai énormément joui de L'Esprit du lys et du trille, spectacle à grand déploiement présenté par L'écho d'un peuple. Pour souligner les 400 années de présence française en Ontario, L'Esprit du lys et du trille nous a fait revivre plusieurs moments marquants de l'histoire des francophones et des 400 ans de victoires à célébrer.

Soulignons quelques faits saillants dans cette histoire :

—l'arrivée du premier Français en Ontario, Étienne Brûlé, qui deviendra le guide de Samuel de Champlain;

—la création de l'ACFÉO face à la venue du règlement 17, la guerre des épingles et l'émeute de Ford City, Windsor;

—que cette année, l'ACFÉO-ACFO-AFO, qui ont pour mission de promouvoir la francophonie et de valoriser les intérêts collectifs de la communauté francophone dans toute sa diversité, tout en favorisant son rayonnement partout en Ontario, fêtent leurs 100 ans; et

—les 35 ans du drapeau franco-ontarien déployé officiellement pour la première fois à l'Université de Sudbury le 25 septembre 1975.

Je suis fier de faire partie d'une communauté qui compte environ 35 % de francophones.

DEBRA DYNES FAMILY HOUSE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to mark a wonderful milestone for my community in Ottawa Centre. This past June 1 was the 15th anniversary of the Debra Dynes Family House.

The family house has been serving the Debra Dynes social housing community with truly valuable programs and supports that make a very real difference for the people of that community and our city of Ottawa as a whole. I have to compliment executive director Barbara Carroll and her dedicated team of staff; Gay Cook, chair of the board; and the volunteers who serve day in and day out to meet emergency and ongoing needs of that community.

The Debra Dynes Family House offers after-school and activity programs for youth, language and skills training for newcomers, community computer access, children's clothes and baby bundles for families, and referrals to other community and government services.

The family house's food cupboard is also one of the largest food banks in the city of Ottawa, serving a wide geographic area and feeding a minimum of 1,500 people in need per month. They even keep birthday cakes in the freezer so no child has to go without a special treat on their special day.

These are people who care deeply about our community, and I wish them all the best on this very special anniversary.

DAY OF GERMAN UNITY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I would like to say a few words on the anniversary of German unity.

Twenty-one years ago, a significant event took place in the history of mankind. That was, of course, the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unity. The Berlin Wall came crashing down not only by bulldozers, but by pickaxes of ordinary folks—yes, even by hand—as pieces of concrete were carried away by Germans on the east side of the wall who had been chafing under Soviet domination. That was 21 years ago. The political unification of the two German states followed a year later, on October 3, 1990.

To help us to celebrate this special event—I introduced to you earlier members of the German community, but for the record we would like to do it again. In the gallery is the consul general of the federal republic, Sabine Sparwasser. We have the president, Mr. Christian Klein, of the Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada; Karl Ruppert, president of the German World Congress; Mr. Frank Danner, the president of the Hansa club of Brampton; and there are even some people here from as far away as London, Ontario, to ensure that their flag gets raised and that Germany finds its place in the sun right here in Ontario, at this Legislature. That's why we are doing these celebrations.

We raise this German flag here at Queen's Park as a significant symbol of pride that the new Germany that was raised from the ashes of World War II is a leading partner for peace, solidly integrated into Europe and greatly respected by the international community.

Just a few words in German associated with Mozart's *Zauberflöte*, and it simply goes like this.

Remarks in German.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to add to those comments a personal thank you to you, Madam Consul General, for that wonderful piece of the Berlin Wall that sits on my desk downstairs in my office.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report, Agencies, Boards and Commissions: Ontario Power Gen-

eration Inc., from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I usually have a script and I was sitting on it.

Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, I'm pleased to table this report on our review of the operations of Ontario Power Generation Inc. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the chair, the president and CEO and staff of Ontario Power Generation Inc. for their assistance and to express our appreciation to those who made presentations to the committee. I thank the committee members for their contributions to the review process, and thanks also goes to our committee clerk, Doug Arnott, and research officer Larry Johnston.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I rise to remind Ontarians that today marks the beginning of Ontario Agriculture Week, and I speak in recognition of the hard work and the dedication of our Ontario farmers. Our government recognizes agriculture as a key economic sector, and as part of this reality, we have provided over \$1.8 billion in ongoing support for our farmers since forming government in 2003.

Ontario's agri-food sector is one of the province's leading industries, contributing more than \$33 billion to the economy every year, and these businesses employ more than 700,000 people. Our government recognizes this sector as a key contributor to the strength of this province's economy. That is why we are committed to initiatives that will make our agri-food industry stronger, including: introducing new animal health legislation; implementing programs under the Growing Forward agreement; working with our ministry colleagues to address wildlife compensation issues; and investing in agri-food research through our partnership with the University of Guelph and the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre.

The strength and diversity of Ontario's agri-food industry is there for everyone to see, whether it's in the aisles of your local grocery store, visiting a farmers' market, dining at a restaurant or taking a drive down a country road. Across Ontario, our farmers produce more than 200 commodities, many of which are processed in this province.

My commitment to Ontario rural communities runs deep. As the MPP and a fifth-generation resident of Huron-Bruce, one of the richest agricultural ridings in Ontario, I know full well the issues and challenges, as well as the successes and achievements, that our farmers have experienced.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, good things do grow in Ontario. Our agri-food industry has a global reputation for excellence. It extends from the fields and farmers' markets to new value-added products, such as soy-based spreads and gluten-free oat products—two innovative agri-food products that have been recipients of the Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence.

Establishing these awards has allowed us, over the past four years, to celebrate the hard work and the ingenuity of hundreds of Ontario farmers, entrepreneurs and processors, and this government is very pleased to be a partner in their success.

Our future success, the success of our province, lies in innovation. We value and honour the past, but there is a new world opening up in front of us. There will be new uses for the crops we grow, from feedstock to fuel our cars to nutraceuticals and more. The opportunities are there.

One in every five Ontarians lives in a small town, communities with populations of less than 25,000. If we want to keep our province strong, we need to make sure that our rural economies prosper. We will continue to support our agri-food industries to generate new economic opportunities, create jobs and support local food through our Open Ontario plan.

Our government is working hard to support local foods. We are committed to working with farmers to increase our fresh food production and to bring more Ontario foods to the table, whether that table is found in our kitchens at home or in the cafeterias of our local schools.

We have invested \$65 million to support the production and the marketing of Ontario foods through key initiatives, such as the Ontario Market Investment Fund. We know that we have a leading role to play in promoting Ontario foods, and we are achieving results through our Foodland Ontario programs. I'm pleased that many major retailers have developed buy-local promotions of their own and are featuring fresh, high-quality foods grown and produced right here in our province.

Philip Donne, president of the Campbell Company of Canada, said: "Local food is no longer a trend; it's a shift." I believe he is right. Never before have there been more exciting times for savouring Ontario homegrown and locally sourced food, but we can do more.

Today I'm encouraging everyone in this Legislature and across the province to celebrate the bounty of Ontario agriculture by having at least one dish on the table made with ingredients grown and produced right here in Ontario while you celebrate this Thanksgiving. You will be surprised how easy it is and how tasty it is.

Ontario's farmers grow high-quality food products that are among the best in the world, and if you buy

Ontario, you're supporting our farmers, you're helping to grow your community and you're also protecting the environment. When we buy Ontario products, everyone wins.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week. This important week was created through a private member's bill by my former colleague Bert Johnson, the Progressive Conservative member from Perth, and it starts on the Monday before Thanksgiving. It is a time to celebrate the accomplishments and the contributions of our farmers.

We are lucky in Ontario to be able to depend on our farmers to produce safe, healthy and abundant food. I want to thank the farmers for that. I know the commitment they make—the long days, the hard work and the uncertain returns. Farmers are an essential part of our rural communities and they are the stewards of our land. They depend on the earth for their living so they know how important it is to take care of it. Whether a restaurant or a grocery store, I encourage Ontarians to ask where their food comes from and, wherever possible, to choose that Ontario food.

Ontario Agriculture Week is also a time to look at the state of our agriculture industry. This year, Ontario's farmers were lucky to have great weather. Of course, it's never perfect, but the early spring, hot summer and good rain certainly helped a lot of our farmers, and there were no disasters impacting market prices. So we need to ask ourselves why so many farmers are still in trouble. Why isn't there a more positive outlook for Ontario agriculture? Instead of predicting growth in the industry, there's a projected \$500-million farm income loss for 2010. I think it's time to ask the tough question. Why?

In the past, people have talked about governments managing from crisis to crisis. Today, they talk about managing by ignoring the crisis. Historically, agriculture has contributed to Ontario's economic strength, but the strength of the sector has been taken for granted. Over the last few years, we saw the priorities of this government shift away from rural Ontario and we have seen the priorities of the Ontario Minister of Agriculture shift away from helping our farmers. The fundamentals, such as support for farmers, have been ignored. Based on ministry estimates over the last four years, direct support for farmers has declined from 38% of the ministry's budget to, this year, 6% of the ministry's budget.

Farmers tell us there's been a shift in government from one that was there to help to one that is heavy-handed and punitive. One example of this government's failure to build the fundamentals of agriculture is the handling of the business risk management program. In 2007, grain and oilseeds producers got a business risk management program based on the cost of production. It was acknowledged by almost everyone that it was a success. In fact, it was so successful that when other commodity groups looked at designing a new program, they used that cost-of-production model.

Last year, the McGuinty government cancelled that grain-and-oilseeds-cost-of-production program. This was a program that was working and that farmers liked, and the government just cancelled it. We asked, and the farmers asked, "Why?" The minister responded that the program wouldn't work without federal support, even though it worked well for three years without it. Yet, seven months later, the government reinstated the program even though nothing had changed. Yet the minister still claims that the cost-of-production program won't work for other sectors without federal support. Why will it work for grain and oilseeds but not for beef and pork, which really need help urgently? Why won't she take action to help farmers today while we still have an agriculture industry in Ontario?

The truth is that other provinces have provincial programs to support agriculture. If we don't have equivalent programs, it puts our farmers at a disadvantage. This government doesn't seem to understand that piling more and more burdens on our farmers has an impact on the health of the industry.

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Look how this government is dealing with the increasing coyote problem in Ontario, which is causing farmers to lose more livestock. The government sees this as a problem too, because the amount of compensation they are paying is increasing. According to the ministry, claims have increased from \$755,000 to \$1.5 million over the past seven years. They're taking compensation out of legislation and putting in regulation.

We discovered that their proposal cuts compensation in a number of ways. Compensation will no longer include future values. Compensation paid will count toward AgriStability, meaning that it will reduce the amount of support that farmers receive and are eligible for.

I know how hard Ontario farmers work. I know the quality of the food they produce. If the government stops burdening them with red tape and more costs and instead works with them, I believe the future of agriculture in Ontario will be strong.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Agriculture Week in Ontario.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased, on behalf of New Democrats and NDP leader Andrea Horwath, to have an opportunity to speak today in celebration of Agriculture Week in Ontario. Having a significant number of farmers and a significant number of rural communities in my constituency of Kenora-Rainy River, I'm especially proud to be able to talk about some of the accomplishments and achievements of those people.

There is no doubt that Ontario has the potential to have a very productive agricultural sector. There is no doubt that farm families in Ontario work very hard, work consistently and make incredible investments in their farms and in our rural communities. I think we all want to recognize them for those efforts and accomplishments.

But I have to say that when I go to fall fairs, as I did in my constituency this year, when I talk to farmers about

their communities and about the challenges they are facing, I wish I could say it's all good news. It's not. The fact of the matter is that the beef industry in Ontario has still not recovered from some of the disasters that were visited on it starting 10 years ago. Farmers are still working very hard to get out from under a mountain of debt and are still facing uncertain economic circumstances.

I wish I could say that our pork and hog producers feel comfortable with their situation, but they don't, and I think the minister knows this. There are all sorts of farmers across this province who made good investments—sound investments—in their pork and hog operations only to discover that they're now facing very serious difficulty.

I wish I could say that we were seeing more food processing operations in Ontario. But just last week, we heard the announcement of the shutdown of some food processing operations here in southern Ontario.

I wish I could say that farmers and rural residents in my riding were very happy with getting their hydro bill every month, but they're not. In fact, they are very worried. For example, people in the dairy industry, where electricity is used to run the milking machines and to run the coolers, where access to electricity is very important for the operation of a dairy farm, are very worried about how they're going to pay the bill. Beef farmers, who have to pump water in order to ensure that their cattle are properly watered, are very worried about the hydro bill—which is the natural source of energy to run the pumps. These are really practical problems.

I wish I could say that farmers are happy on some other fronts. But in fact they're worried about the shutdown of rural schools, because they know that every time their neighbourhood school shuts down and their kids are forced to go further, this is another cost and another difficulty placed in their way. And they're very worried about the reduction of health care services at local hospitals, because what seems to be happening with the LHINs, at least in my part of the province, is that more and more health care services are being taken out of smaller communities and centralized in larger communities, which, again, makes it more and more difficult for rural and farm families to deal with some of the big challenges of life.

While I join with my colleagues in saying thank you to Ontario farmers, thank you to agricultural producers in Ontario, I have to say to the minister that your government has in fact made it more difficult for farm families in this province; that farm families increasingly wonder, "How are we going to pay the bills? How are we going to deal with the everyday issues of life? How do we pay the hydro bill? How do we pay the bill for heating fuel and all of these things?"

I sincerely hope that the government will pay more attention to these kinds of matters because it would be a travesty to lose even more farms and more agricultural production in Ontario.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act ... regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with that and I sign the petition.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition supporting extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning ... systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of

any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more, and I'm going sign my name and give this to Emily R. to be delivered.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Megan.

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GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that I have it signed this time. It's signed by the clerks, and it's signed by people in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and even from Huron-Bruce. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

"Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

I have also signed this.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I am tabling a petition from the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario and from the Carleton University Students' Association.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 1994, the Ontario government disqualified international students from the Ontario health insurance program (OHIP); and

"Whereas international students must now pay private health insurance fees through the university health insur-

ance plan (UHIP) that are more than \$800 a year, and students with two or more dependants can be required to pay over \$3,000 in mandatory hospital insurance fees; and

"Whereas in some instances, such fees have increased by more than 30% in a single year; and

"Whereas international students already pay tuition fees that are three to four times higher than fees charged to domestic students for the same education; and

"Whereas Ontario's 35,000 international students pay provincial taxes and contribute \$900 million to the provincial economy each year but do not receive health care like all Ontario residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore OHIP coverage for international students."

I affix my signature and send it to the table via page Nick.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition presented to me by Don Henderson of RR 4, St. Marys. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance of Stratford, Ontario, in their Vision 2013 report to the South West LHIN, is planning to reduce the operating hours of St. Marys Memorial Hospital emergency department from 24-7 to 16-7 and reduce the number of acute care beds and also move rehabilitative beds from St. Marys Memorial Hospital to Seaforth general hospital, which would force residents of St. Marys and surrounding areas to travel 51 kilometres or more to receive rehabilitative care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Save our hospital: We, the undersigned, urge our leaders not to accept the recommendations in the Vision 2013 report and not to reduce our emergency room hours of operation and not to reduce our acute care beds."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present this on behalf of the residents of Perth-Wellington and Huron-Bruce riding, and thank you very much for the opportunity.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from the Rielly families of Peterborough, Kitchener and Belleville. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children en-

dured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank again my friend Ken Sharp of Peterborough for providing me with this petition. To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Thomas.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition, the first one of which I'm sure I'm going to be receiving many more to come, and I'll read it. It's to do with paved shoulders, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on

designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I support this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the eco tax, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to raise taxes in Ontario despite a fragile economy; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government already down-loaded a smart meter energy tax on to Ontarians; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has added his new secret eco tax; and

“Whereas the eco tax will be slapped on over 10,000 household items such as detergent, makeup, smoke detectors and sunblock; and

“Whereas the eco taxes are being levied and collected by a secretive, unaccountable government agency that spends tax dollars without any meaningful public oversight or transparency; and

“Whereas a Tim Hudak PC government would scrap the eco tax;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government cancel the eco tax that further burdens Ontario’s families and seniors.”

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I again have another petition from Ken Sharp to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to Ioana.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the wonderful member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you to the government House leader for that introduction.

I'm pleased to stand in the House today for second reading of Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

Quite an introduction, but to add to that I'd also like to acknowledge the Rempel family who are here today from Wilmot township and New Hamburg in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. We have Len, Kathleen and Greg, who are the family of page Emily Rempel, who is our page captain today. Welcome today, and well done, Emily.

More to the speech—and also my mum and dad, who are watching, and my husband, Richard. I have to include them.

1350

This proposed enhanced tax credit would boost tax relief to 2.8 million Ontarians and would help support seniors and low- to middle-income families with energy costs and property taxes.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit, or the OEPTC—I'm not sure which is easier to say; I think they're both equally as difficult—is the latest tax relief in our Open Ontario plan.

Introduced last March, the Open Ontario plan lays the foundation of the government's strategy to position the province for new opportunities, new jobs and, of course, new economic growth. It's about reassessing how Ontario does business and how it can best prepare for the times ahead. It's about maximizing existing resources consisting, of course, of Ontario's people, consisting of

programs and processes to the best that they can be as the economic recovery takes hold. Also, it's about ensuring that the people who call Ontario home can enjoy a quality of life that is second to none.

Undeniably, the global economic downturn has affected more than just businesses. As part of our Open Ontario plan, the government is making investments to help Ontarians adapt and has introduced several targeted tax relief measures.

As of January 2010, the average Ontarian is receiving an income tax break of \$200 per year. There's also the new northern Ontario energy credit that will help eligible northerners manage their energy costs.

Just a couple of weeks ago, we proposed the children's activity tax credit to help families by putting some money back into the pockets of the people of Ontario and promote an active and healthy lifestyle for our children.

The next stage of our tax relief would be provided through this proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit, or OEPTC.

In the 2010 Ontario budget, our government announced that we would be converting the Ontario property tax credit into the Ontario energy and property tax credit in order to deliver more than \$1.2 billion in annual support to low- and middle-income Ontarians.

Last week, the Premier and the Minister of Finance announced that our government is proposing to enhance the support originally announced by \$525 million, for a total of \$1.3 billion in annual support. To provide additional assistance for seniors, the government is proposing to increase the income levels at which the credit begins to be reduced. This means that more seniors would benefit from the full credit and a greater number of seniors would qualify.

With this proposed enhancement, 50,000 more seniors would be eligible for the credit and another 690,000 seniors would receive a higher amount. Therefore, approximately 740,000 senior families and single seniors would be eligible for up to \$1,025 in annual support.

Seniors have worked hard to help build the province that we are enjoying today. The enhancements we are proposing to this tax credit would make things a little easier for seniors by providing some help with household maintenance costs.

Ontarians would be able to apply for the Ontario energy and property tax credit starting with their 2010 tax returns. The credit would be paid out in four quarterly payments, just like the new Ontario sales tax credit and the GST credit.

This measure supports recommendations by social policy advocates to send out frequent payment of property tax credits rather than one lump sum payment in order to improve cash flow to the recipients themselves. This way, the people of Ontario receive the funds when they need it.

I'd like to now provide a few details about how this tax credit would work. To target assistance to those who need it most, the OEPTC would be income-tested.

To provide additional assistance for seniors, as I mentioned, we're proposing to increase the income level at which the credit begins to be reduced for seniors from those that were announced in the 2009 budget. So, the income thresholds would be increased to \$25,000 from \$20,000 for single seniors and to \$30,000 from \$25,000 for senior couples and single seniors living with dependent children.

This follows improvements we made in the 2009 budget, when the non-senior income thresholds were raised to \$20,000 from \$4,000 for single people and to \$25,000 for families, including single parents. For all recipients, the OEPTC would be reduced by 2% of adjusted family net income over the applicable income thresholds, which would be indexed annually for inflation. For non-seniors, a family or a single person who owns or rents a home would be able to claim an energy amount of up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$50 plus 10% of their occupancy costs, to a maximum of \$700.

This means that non-seniors would be able to receive up to \$900 of support every year. A senior family or a single senior who owns or rents a home could claim an energy amount of up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$425 plus 10% of their occupancy cost, to a maximum of \$825, for a maximum amount of \$1,025 per year. Ontarians who do not pay property tax or rent but still pay for home energy—those who live on a reserve or in a long-term-care facility—would still be eligible for tax relief through the energy component of this proposed credit.

I'd like to provide a few case examples of how the OEPTC would work for senior and non-senior singles and families. Let's use the example of a senior couple with \$50,000 in net income who pay \$4,320 a year in property tax on their home. In 2009, they would have received \$208 in property tax assistance from Ontario's tax credits. Under the Ontario property tax credit, they would have received \$317 more. Under the new, enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit, they would receive \$625, or \$100 more, because of the new enhancements, which is a total of \$417 in additional relief.

If we were to imagine a single senior with one child with a \$25,000 net income who pays \$675 a month for an apartment, in 2009 he would receive \$104 in property tax assistance from Ontario's tax credits. Under the Ontario energy and property tax credit, he would receive \$412, or an astonishing \$308 more in relief than he would have in 2009.

Since our announcements last week, we've received positive feedback from seniors and the people of Ontario across the province. The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, or CARP, is a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization committed to advocating for a new vision for aging in Canada. CARP calls the targeted relief for lower-income seniors and the inclusion of a higher threshold "welcome news" that "directs the relief where it's needed most."

I thought this would be a good time to share a quote that I have from the announcement I was privileged to make in Wellesley, in my riding, last Tuesday. John Thompson was there. John is the chair of the board of directors of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons for chapter 25. John says:

"In my opinion, the Ontario energy and property tax credit increase for seniors is a very positive, progressive and compassionate strategy to assist Ontario's seniors who are on a fixed income. A tax break for the necessities of life, shelter and energy will provide additional personal resources for seniors to enhance their quality of life in other discretionary aspects of their personal budgets."

1400

He goes on to say that, "The credit increase for seniors is a wise decision to assist those who have, over their adult lives, contributed so much to the prosperity of the province of Ontario." We thank John for that quote. He hits it right on the head with that quote. Of course, as a result of our announcement last Tuesday of the OEPTC, John has decided to re-engage chapter 25 of CARP in the townships in Waterloo region. So this has been a really good-news announcement, especially locally for us on all levels.

Since 2003, our government has been firmly committed to introducing innovative new programs that create measurable improvements in the lives of the people of Ontario. Over the past seven years, these investments have raised the quality of life and are helping the Ontario economy and our families adapt to these sweeping global changes that we're experiencing.

One of the priorities, as I've mentioned, has been to support programs that help Ontario seniors to live safe, active and healthy lives. I'm pleased to stand here today and highlight a few of the accomplishments that are helping our seniors.

In 2008, we announced the new Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant. In 2010, we doubled the maximum grant to \$500. This grant provides eligible senior homeowners with assistance with property taxes. Over the next five years, we will be providing an additional \$1 billion through this grant, which will benefit more than 600,000 seniors with low to middle incomes who live in their own homes.

In 2007, the McGuinty government launched the four-year, \$1.1-billion aging at home strategy. I have a quote to show how the OEPTC announcement that I did last Tuesday ties in with this. An 87-year-old senior shared an interesting insight with me that I will share with you. The aging at home strategy is designed to provide support to seniors and their caregivers to help seniors stay healthy and live with dignity and independence in the comfort, of course, of their own homes.

We've also expanded home care services to about 500,000 Ontarians each and every year. The new and enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit would be added on to these measures to provide additional support to seniors with their home maintenance costs. As I men-

tioned earlier, the OEPTC also supports seniors living in long-term-care homes. Our government has taken several important steps to support our seniors living in these homes. Earlier this year, Ontario introduced legislative protections for seniors living in retirement homes. For the first time in Ontario's history, seniors living in retirement homes across Ontario will be protected under the new Retirement Homes Act, which received royal assent in June. The act creates regulatory authority with the power to license homes, to conduct inspections, investigations and enforcement, including financial penalties or revoking licences, if necessary, and it further establishes mandatory care, safety standards, requirements for emergency plans, infection control prevention programs, assessment of care needs and care planning, police background checks, and training for staff. Finally, it establishes residents' rights, including the right to know the true cost of care and accommodation and the right to live in an environment that promotes zero tolerance of abuse or neglect.

Our government has taken a number of important steps to ensure that seniors who cannot live at home enjoy access to the highest-quality long-term-care services, including making key investments in long-term-care homes and increasing front-line staff.

At this point, I want to interject. I have two quotes that have to do with the OEPTC announcement and the long-term-care connection: "The achievements that we've seen add more than 8,200 new beds in long-term-care homes since 2003, as well as increasing long-term-care funding by more than \$1 billion since 2003 and funding more than 6,100 front-line staff in long-term-care homes, including 2,300 nurses."

If passed, the enhanced energy and property tax credit would put some more money back into seniors' pockets. This supports one of the McGuinty government's key priorities: to help our seniors retire with income, security and dignity.

I wanted to share a quote from Cyril Rideout. He goes by the name of "Cy." He also was at the announcement in Wellesley last Tuesday. Cy is 83 years old, although I don't believe him. He doesn't look a day over—well, that's a dangerous one, isn't it? He doesn't look 83, but he assures me he is. He works with Community Care Concepts in Wellesley and throughout the townships. At the announcement he shared with us some of his insights and how he feels the OEPTC will benefit seniors throughout the province, most specifically in Wellesley township. Cy Rideout says, and I quote:

"As a provider of services for seniors, helping to keep them in their own homes in safety and comfort, Community Care Concepts offers Meals on Wheels, volunteer-assisted transportation, home cleaning and maintenance. With our hospitals full, there is a need to keep our seniors safe and comfortable in their own homes.

"With today's announcement"—that was the OEPTC announcement—"this new tax credit gives seniors the opportunity to cover expenses such as hydro, property tax and other expenses as a result of living at home."

We thank Cy for that. I do have another quote from him that I'll share with you shortly.

Ontario is playing a leading role in a national effort to review the state of the current retirement income system, its future sustainability and options that could strengthen the system for our seniors.

Our government is in the midst of reforms to modernize the Pension Benefits Act. Recent reforms were the first major enhancements to our province's pension system in over 20 years. These upcoming reforms build on recommendations from an Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions and subsequent consultations with stakeholders to improve financial security of our province's pensioners.

The McGuinty government is also supporting seniors through reforms to the rules for locked-in retirement savings accounts, thereby giving seniors and other Ontarians more flexibility in accessing funds in these accounts.

In January of this year, in 2010, we increased unlocking from Ontario life income funds to 50% from 25%, and looking back, effective April 1, 2009, we provided a two-year waiver of fees for financial hardship, unlocking applications.

The enhanced energy and tax credit for seniors and families is just one more measure we have taken since 2003 to invest in our seniors, to help them with income security and provide our seniors with more opportunities to stay active, healthy and involved in their communities.

Steve Kannon, the editor of the *Woolwich Observer*, also wrote about the OEPTC and the announcement last Tuesday: "New Tax Credits are Aimed at Household Costs."

He writes, "Seniors stand to gain the most under the proposed new Ontario energy and property tax credit, though the measures will apply to some 2.8 million low- and middle-income residents. Ontarians who own or rent a home could receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to \$1,025."

We thank Steve Kannon for that in the *Woolwich Observer*. He has summed up that portion of this particular bill quite nicely.

In 2009, we announced that we're investing more than \$1.2 million to expand our elderly persons centres program, which supports the maintenance, operation and programming of senior centres across the province. These centres serve as vital community hubs that provide health, social and recreational programs, of course, to promote wellness for seniors.

1410

We also announced, in 2009, an investment of \$900,000 annually to provide the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse with long-term stability to better assist victims of elder abuse in communities across the province. This investment supports the work of regional elder abuse consultants, over 50 local elder abuse networks and community agencies implementing the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse.

It works together with the OEPTC, of course, because it's all working to protect seniors, keep them safe in their

homes and to help them where they need the most help; in this case, coordinating community services, raising awareness of elder abuse, and letting seniors know where they can go for help. The investment with that funding since 2003 totals over \$4.2 million.

In addition, there was funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, in partnership with the Assaulted Women's Helpline, introduced the Seniors Safety Line; again, so important in keeping seniors safe, keeping them in their homes and keeping them without risk in their communities—24 hours a day, seven days a week, in more than 150 languages.

Ontario's senior population is expected to double to 4.2 million over the next 25 years. By 2017, which, as I just realized, is my retirement date, for the first time seniors will account for a larger share of the population than children 14 and under—wow. Our government is well aware of this reality. We continue to work hard to ensure that Ontario seniors have access to quality programs and services that will allow them to live safe, happy, healthy and independent lives.

The proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit is just the latest example of investments our government is making to support Ontario seniors. These are investments we're making to support the very foundation of our Open Ontario plan, which is, of course, Ontario's people.

I had another quote from Cy Rideout from the energy and property tax credit announcement that we did in Wellesley. I thought it would be appropriate to insert it here. Cy—Cyril; he goes by Cy—says, "As a member of the Community Care Concepts board and a volunteer driver for patients and Meals on Wheels, I'm aware of the needs of many seniors who are on fixed incomes. I know that they will welcome your announcement of the tax relief for Ontario energy costs and property taxes. It may well be the difference that will allow them to remain comfortably in their own home."

I reiterate what Cy is saying himself at 83, that this OEPTC may well be the difference that will allow seniors to remain in their homes and to remain comfortable in their own homes.

Furthermore, the OEPTC is one part of a larger comprehensive tax reform plan which provides significant tax cuts and relief for Ontario families and individuals. Through our tax plan for jobs and growth, we're delivering \$11.8 billion in permanent and temporary tax relief over three years to Ontario families and singles. Our government has permanently cut Ontario personal income tax for 93% of income taxpayers, with most now saving an additional \$200 each year. We also eliminated provincial income tax for 90,000 Ontarians.

Furthermore, eligible Ontarians are receiving three transition payments over this year, totalling \$1,000 for families and \$300 for singles, as well as the Ontario sales tax credit which provides up to \$260 for eligible seniors and families each year. Of course, our northern residents who pay rent or property tax are now eligible for an

annual credit of up to \$130 for a single person and \$200 for a family.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit is one more thing that we can do to help put money back in the pockets of Ontario families and Ontario seniors. This tax credit directly supports our 2010 budget commitment to help Ontarians with home energy costs and to help Ontarians with property taxes.

I want to conclude by re-emphasizing the important fact that the proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit would provide \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million people in Ontario. That's why I ask for the support of the House in passing this act. Thank you for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talked about all the tax cuts that they're giving to seniors and to low-income people. Tax cuts are handed out by a government when things are out of whack, when things get out of proportion. So this whole bill talking about tax cuts is a testament to the failure of this government to get a quality program in place that Ontarians could live with. It's a shame that it has come to this.

The member talks about 93% of Ontarians getting a tax cut. She doesn't talk about the 100% of Ontarians who paid huge increases through income tax increases, through eco taxes, through all the various programs this government has brought in. If they took away \$100 from a taxpayer, they've given them back something like \$7 on \$100. This government has had money flowing one way, out of taxpayers' pockets into government coffers—and that has been ongoing since 2003, when the first thing this government did was break their promise that they wouldn't raise taxes. "I will not raise your taxes": That was a promise the Premier made, and the first thing he did was bring in the largest tax increase in Ontario's history.

Of course, since that time, he also has the record on providing the highest deficit in Ontario's history—over \$20 billion of deficit. He also has the record for increasing the provincial debt more than any other Premier in Ontario's history. I'd say that's a grand slam for the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the words from the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, but I have to say that even though I think it's a good idea to give a credit to seniors and I think that we should vote in favour of giving people that credit, let's recognize that although they're getting from one hand, money is being taken by the other. The deregulation of gas utilities in this province, the increase in profits allowed to electrical utilities, the HST on electricity bills, the commitment to high-priced nuclear: The wide range of decisions that have been made that drive up electricity costs and make life more unaffordable in this province cannot be corrected by this simple tax credit.

There's a reality in Ontario, and that is that our energy system has got to be renewed. We, in this province, can make decisions to renew it in a way that's cost-effective, environmentally beneficial and a way that will, in fact, generate jobs in Ontario, or, on the other hand, we can make decisions that are very expensive, have little or no positive impact on the environment and, in the end, make life far more difficult for seniors and for people right across the spectrum in this province.

It's unfortunate and it's wrong that this government has decided to go with a high-cost, low-benefit strategy. That's a mistake. This bill before us today is meant to deal with some of that political fallout. I don't think it will deal with all that political fallout. I think that people will be happy to get a cheque because they feel hard-pressed, but they also understand, and they understand well, that this government is making huge mistakes on the electricity file, and they're stuck with the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: This bill is really part of an ongoing series of programs our government has had to try to help seniors, whether they be tenants or homeowners. It's a credit that you get when you fill out your income tax—I know that many seniors are certainly very happy when they receive this credit—and then there's a grant too.

1420

What is happening now is that the grant for homeowners has been increased from \$250 a year. They can get a cheque that comes from the government of Ontario for up to \$500 now, and a lot of them got it when they filled out their income tax this year.

The only problem I found was that a lot of people who fill out the income tax for seniors are not really up to speed in terms of how to fill it out for seniors and they miss—there's one page there where all you have to do is check a box and the seniors become eligible for the grants and credits. You can get up to \$1,500 based on income. It really makes me almost cry when I see seniors come into the office and their income tax forms have not been made out correctly.

I'm sure that in all our ridings, if you check with your seniors you'll see that invariably there are a great number who have been shortchanged because they didn't get the proper instruction or the proper income tax form filled by their local hairdresser or whoever does their income tax. I think that one job we have as MPPs is to check those. There are many of them who could get this grant and credit. So this is an enhancement of that.

I know that in Toronto—the same as with Toronto—Danforth—there are a lot of seniors who are property-rich and pocket-poor. This really helps them especially, in a city like Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The member for Kitchener-Conestoga mentioned in her remarks the pension reform that this government has been undertaking. I'm urging the government to undertake even more

pension reform to accommodate the very desperate situation that Nortel pensioners are finding themselves in.

Members of the Legislature will remember that almost a year and a half ago I brought forward to this Legislature a bill that would have allowed Nortel pensioners two choices when their pension fund was wound up. One was the present option—the only option—to buy individual annuities. I brought forward a suggestion that the pensioner would have the opportunity to put their funds or a portion of their funds into a registered retirement instrument so that they would be able to avoid the very, very low returns that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario is going to get when they buy individual annuities. That was rejected by the government members—the Liberal members of this Legislative Assembly. All the members of the opposition supported that particular endeavour.

As well, the Nortel group has been asking the government to undertake their suggestion to establish a financial services model, which has been successful in other jurisdictions.

Needless to say, we need to have this government trying harder for the Nortel pensioners. They will appreciate the small cheque they get from this, because they're going to suffer so badly from their losses from the bankruptcy of Nortel. But we need this government to go further for the Nortel pensioners.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'd like to acknowledge the comments by the members from Halton, Toronto–Danforth, Eglinton–Lawrence and Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

I want to reiterate one of the comments that I read, but I did want to also stress that we are talking about 985,000 seniors in the province of Ontario who will benefit from this. About 245,000 will continue to see tax relief, another 690,000 seniors will see an increase in the tax relief they receive, and 50,000 seniors will see relief that they hadn't previously seen. So this is quite a significant and substantial energy and property tax credit that we are proposing. I wanted people to understand the numbers, specifically of seniors, and that about 2.8 million people in the province of Ontario will benefit from this as well.

I did say that I would give you a quote from the 87-year-old woman I met. I didn't go back for it, but my mum PINed me to remind me to tell you. Here it is.

When I was at the announcement, a gentleman came up to me and said, "Thank you for this. This supports my 87-year-old mother for living in her home. She couldn't be here today because she's not mobile." So I went there to see her, I went to her home and she clasped my hands and said to me, "Thank you so much for your help today because it means that I can stay in my own home. Your help today is the right thing for me. Thank you."

So I convey that to the House, and reiterate that it is the right thing to do—the Ontario energy and property

tax credit for seniors—as well as for all the people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 109, which is An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments. The member for Durham may be sharing some of my time with me as well.

Let me begin by saying that this is a modest tax credit. I know the Minister of Finance, when he introduced the bill and spoke to it briefly, talked about a billion dollars. Well, the actual effect of this particular bill, Bill 109, is that it's a \$70-million project, which sounds like a lot of money, but when you start spreading it across the province, it is relatively minor. I will point that out as I have an opportunity to speak to the bill.

It was announced in the 2010 budget that they were going to convert the existing Ontario property tax credit to the Ontario energy and property tax credit starting with the 2010 taxation year. Frankly, this could have been dealt with in the spring budget bill. But the way the government's rolling it out, each week they seem to have a new individual tax credit bill, and I think that is about getting more political bang for the buck and about optics, about looking to be doing something about the rising costs that Ontario families and Ontario seniors are facing. Last week, the bill we were debating was an Ontario child tax credit worth some \$50 per family, which, for most families, is not going to be a huge amount of money. And now, this week, we're debating the Ontario energy and property tax credit.

Certainly, I have a lot of examples from my riding about how people on the ground are being affected by the rising costs to do with energy in the province of Ontario. So any tax relief that the families and seniors of Ontario can get, we're going to support. But it is relatively minor, especially when you look at all the various increases that have come about. Most recently, one of the big-ticket items, of course, is the HST, which is on people's electricity bills—that's 8%. This bill we're debating I don't think will even cover the additional cost of the HST on people's bills. We also have seen in the spring that an 8% to 10% increase in rates was approved by the Ontario Energy Board.

Across the province, the government is implementing smart meters. People have to pay for those smart meters on their electricity bill. I believe it's roughly around \$4 on each of those bills, and that's before they're turned on and we get the time-of-use factor. I've got some letters I'll get on the record to do with what's happening on the ground and the effect that that's having on people's energy bills.

Of course, we have the Green Energy Act and the contracts the government is entering into: the big Samsung contract, of course, and the many feed-in tariff contracts. I call them the "buy high, sell low" process, where the government is entering into 20-year deals to, for ex-

ample, buy solar energy at 80 cents a kilowatt hour. Of course, most of us are paying somewhere around seven, eight or nine cents a kilowatt hour for electricity. So the difference between that eight or nine cents and the 80 cents is going to be made up by all ratepayers, and we have not seen the effect of that yet. In fact, last week in estimates with the Minister of Finance, Mr. Sterling and I were asking questions about what the future liability would be for the feed-in tariff. So far, I have not had an answer to that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would just remind the member to refer to other members by their riding name rather than their name. Thank you.

1430

Mr. Norm Miller: I would if I could remember his riding name. He's changed the name so much on me—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norm Miller: Carleton–Mississippi Mills. Thank you.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Just Ottawa.

Mr. Norm Miller: The member for Ottawa. I know that he is here making a point, especially as he just spoke briefly a minute ago about his concern for Nortel pensioners. He's been doing a great job on every opportunity, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. On that front, in fact last week in estimates committee he asked—he kind of used a lot of my time, I would say, asking many questions to do with Nortel pensioners, speaking up for them and putting forward questions that have to do with the financial sponsorship model that they're recommending. He's been doing a great job speaking up for many of his constituents who are Nortel retirees. Congratulations on that. Keep up the good work.

We aren't even seeing—the Green Energy Act hasn't really kicked in. We had studies on that, showing that one thing's for sure: When you're buying power at 80 cents a kilowatt hour and selling it much lower than that, that's going to drive everybody's costs up. We had London Economics—we commissioned a study with them—and they showed that it's going to have a profound effect on people's energy bills over the next few years. There are various studies, some that show energy bills going up 43% by 2015.

Also, on the energy front, despite being in power seven years, the government has not dealt with the nuclear power situation. That's something they've just not acted on, and here we are, seven years later. It takes a long time, if you're going to create new nuclear energy, and yet they've done nothing on that front.

We're seeing all kinds of pressures on people's electricity bills and I'm afraid it's going to get worse. We're going to support this modest tax credit proposed in Bill 109, but it is just that: very modest. In fact, one of the new taxes the government put in in the past year was a tax on energy bills to pay for in-home energy audits that are done, to cover the cost of those energy audits—which works out to about \$4 a month on people's bills. It was a

\$55-million program. As I say, the total value of this program is \$70 million.

The parliamentary assistant talked about CARP endorsing this. That's the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. I read their press release, and I'll quote a different part of it than the parliamentary assistant did. I would call it very faint praise. Let me just quote from their press release of September 28, 2010, where CARP says:

“CARP has consistently called on the Ontario government to provide relief for home energy costs for Ontarians who have been hit particularly hard by the combination of the new harmonized sales tax, time-of-use meters, rising home energy costs, and rising property taxes. Older Ontarians, especially those with low and fixed incomes, have faced escalating home energy costs and those who find it necessary to spend a considerable amount of time in their homes have been the most affected.”

They go on to say, “CARP members will be pleased that the Ontario government has responded to their call for relief from mounting home energy costs—which were made worse by the new HST and smart meter rates. This targeted relief for lower-income seniors and moving to include a higher income threshold will be welcome news and directs the relief where it is needed most.

“In submissions to government, CARP supported its call for relief with the results [of] member polling—of the over 3,700 respondents 69% did not think the one-time-only rebates and generalized tax relief were enough to offset the added burden of the HST and 86% did not believe that business would pass through their savings.” Obviously, they're glad to get some relief, but it's pretty faint praise for this initiative.

You look at some of the commentaries here. Christina Blizzard has written about this proposal. The headline: “Dam! Hydro Bills Make us Cry.”

“McGuinty says investments in power grid helped avoid blackouts, a claim that's pure hogwash.” That's interesting, isn't it?

“Premier Dalton McGuinty's promise to give a monetary break to seniors facing soaring hydro bills won't help Mark Robertson's parents.

“The Scarborough seniors worked hard, paid their bills and saved for a comfortable retirement.

“And while they can pay their way, it didn't stop Robertson's mom from crying when she opened up her most recent electricity bill—and found from now on, she'll be paying a whopping \$905 every two months.

“Electricity bills went up 8% in June. Then the HST kicked another 8% in on July 1.

“Over the next six months, most analysts expect prices to soar—as rate hikes, time-of-use smart meters and other charges kick in. Windmills and solar may be trendy and green, but they're expensive and will push up the cost of electricity to the stratosphere.

“Robertson's dad is 84, his mom is 86. His dad is in the final stages of cancer. He came home from hospital for palliative care.

"He needs an oxygen machine to keep him alive.

"And that machine is causing a spike in his electricity costs. His last bill showed a 'budget catch-up' adjustment of \$478.86—doubling his parents' bill.

"My mom cried when she opened it," Robertson said in an interview.

"And they can't even claim the electricity as a medical cost.

"With the rebate only covering people making less than \$30,000, his parents' past thrift means they won't qualify.

"The people who have actually saved up and worked hard and are veterans and have slightly more retirement income don't qualify for it, and that's not fair either."

"An extra tax"

"It's like an extra tax on people who have contributed so much to the country," Robertson said.

"Soaring energy costs were front and centre at Queen's Park last week as the latest hydro bills started to thud through mailboxes.

"The Robertsons' earlier bill of \$377.29 was made up of \$105.48 for delivery; \$22.99 for regulatory, a \$22.31 'debt retirement charge'—and HST of \$49.04.

"McGuinty likes to say the extra costs are going to produce more energy, better transmission and cleaner energy.

"He likes to point out we got through a hot summer with no blackouts or brownouts—hinting that wasn't the case when the Tories were in power.

"That's only partially true.

"While the McGuinty government announced last Friday four more coal plants would close permanently, the only coal plant mothballed before last week—Lakeview in Mississauga—was actually ordered shut by the previous Tory government."

Isn't that interesting? For all that this government's been talking about shutting down coal-fired electricity generation, the only plant actually shut was ordered by the member for Kitchener. We all know the record of the government on promising—they're very good at promising to shut down coal-fired electricity. In fact, if they kept their original promise, they would all have been shut in 2007. I believe it was originally 2004, wasn't it? From 2004 to 2007: It keeps changing.

"And with the devastation in the manufacturing sector"—going back to the article—"we don't need anywhere near the amount of electricity we required when the economy was booming.

"There might have been fewer smog days. The truth is, though, that most of our smog comes from coal plants in the Ohio valley. And with massive cutbacks in the auto sector and the manufacturing sector there, those coal plants simply aren't pumping out the same amount of electricity.

"Yes, we did have a blackout when the Tories were in power in 2003. But it wasn't caused by faulty transmission lines or a lack of generation here.

"The problem was with a poorly maintained hydro line in Ohio.

"You get the impression that the rebate announced by the government last week was hastily thrown together on the back of a napkin.

"It was in response to the roar of disapproval from voters across the province who, like the Robertsons, opened their bills—and wept."

That was an article by Christina Blizzard. You can see that it's her perspective that the government is reacting to all the pushback they're getting from constituents who are opening their electricity bills and being shocked at the huge bills they're facing.

I have certainly heard, on the smart meter front—mainly anecdotally, but it seems quite universal across the province when you talk to other MPPs. The smart meters get installed—they haven't started the time-of-use metering in most places—but they're installed, and then the next month, for some reason, your hydro bill goes up. That's a story that I've heard from many MPPs who have been contacted by constituents. I don't know whether there's a fault with the actual meters or what the answer is, but I can tell you, it's a common story I've heard around the province.

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In fact, I received this letter from a constituent of mine. I won't put his name on the record, but I did want to get on the record some of what he said about smart meters, because I have received quite a few letters like this. This was from March of this year:

"This letter is the result of sudden and unexpected outrageous increases to hydro accounts since the installation of the so-called smart meters in the late fall of 2009. I was present the day of installation, having time to converse with the installer (a retired hydro worker, called back in to help move the installation forward with some expediency). We discussed the relationship between consumer and smart meter, arriving at the same conclusion: that this installation of such a new technology, touted to be the best thing since Swiss cheese, resulting in some indigestion, the only one suffering would be the consumer—the real loser!

"One of my tenants approached me on the 26th of February, 2010, furious about her latest bill. I must say, it was extremely high, given that it was a 'read' meter reading. Her bill had gone from \$200–\$300 monthly to a charge of \$1,400 for two months, even though usage had never changed. The tenant called Hydro One and filed a complaint. As usual, it was given a level of toilet priority—flushed. They were told, 'It is what it is and you will have to pay the account or have your services cut off.' We also received a final billing for \$320 for a unit that was vacant for 21 days. I can only imagine that if someone was living in this unit during this period, the billing may have exceeded \$1,000. What impact will this have on the working people in this province? Both of these units rent out at \$975 monthly. Now add to that the cost of Hydro One services at \$700 plus per month. Hydro One, the Ontario Energy Board and the Liberal Party can envision naked, half-starved people trying to get to work to get enough money to pay their utility bills. However,

they still require food and clothing as well as transportation. Maybe this province will have to import a lot of canned cat food and crackers to feed the working poor as well as the elderly living on the edge. You can be sure the Premier would not find this very appetizing!

"The owner of the Tim Hortons franchises in Huntsville was furious when he received his latest billing from Hydro One ('three times the usual monthly billings'). Well, at least we can say that Hydro One is not prejudiced. They really do not care who owns the account. Another business owner in Huntsville has had a hydro crew working around his home for the past two weeks in an effort to determine why his consumption is so abnormally high, why the new smart meter recently installed by Hydro One has been spiking continuously since it was used to replace the old reliable analog meters of the past."

That's an indication from one constituent around the Huntsville area.

Still on smart meters and time-of-use metering, I was at Murray Ore's business in Parry Sound, Orr's Fine Meats and Deli. I drop in there on a regular basis when I'm in Parry Sound. He was very concerned. He serves lunch there, but of course, it's a butcher shop, and he's got all kinds of refrigerators and freezers. He can't shut them off during the day in prime time, when the bills are the highest, and start them up at night; they run all the time. So he was very, very concerned about what was going to happen to his bill. He can't shift the demand to the middle of the night; he has no option. He's very concerned about the effect that was going to have on his small business.

We have heard, as the member from Halton pointed out, that the Premier is suggesting that to get the cheaper rate, we all need to start doing our laundry either in the middle of the night or on Saturdays. So Saturdays will become the laundry day across the province.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: He needs to get an ice house.

Mr. Norm Miller: We used to have ice houses.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I think they're going to be making a comeback.

Mr. Norm Miller: The member from Mississippi Mills is suggesting that maybe we'll have a resurgence of ice houses in the province of Ontario. We used to actually have an ice house back at the resort I formerly ran. Mind you, that was about 40 years ago. When they would go out on the lake, cut the ice and pack it in the ice house, as a kid, I got to take fish that people caught inside and put them on the ice. We may be heading back there.

This letter I have is from a constituent talking about her concerns. It's hand-written, and she did say I could use her name, Marion DeMerchant, and her concerns:

"Dear Mr. Miller,

"I need your help, please.

"With the new meter my hydro bill is 'said' to double the average of the past five years.

"I called hydro—they will not even come to check the meter or the reason for the increase.

"I heat with oil and wood; have no clothes dryer nor any additional electric equipment.

"Plus I have been away two days of each week during a warmer-than-normal winter.

"I am alone on fixed retirement income and usually keep heat from the oil furnace at 15 degrees to save oil.

"I have a friend who heats a home, twice the square feet of my 1,000 square-foot, by all electric. His bill is \$313 and mine \$322.

"PS: I told hydro that I'm unable to pay the full \$322 out of my monthly pension, OAS and CPP."

That is a concerned constituent, and that is kind of what is happening on the ground with these increased costs.

I have many concerned constituents writing to me. Here's another concerned with time-of-use pricing:

"Dear Mr. Miller,

"Thank you for your continued support in our area, and this opportunity to express my concerns re: time of use pricing.

"Other than the fact that the time-of-use positive returns at the consumer level are not being realized in terms of reducing our overall consumption costs, I also have additional concerns which seem not to be being addressed in this matter.

"(1) irrespective of our individual (residential) consumption and proven lack of ability to reduce our own costs of use under this program, there are a multitude of commercial organizations in Ontario which, because of their business needs, cannot run at off-peak times. Unquestionably, these organizations' electrical consumption costs will increase significantly. Being by necessity profit-driven, there is only one place they can recover those costs, and that is from the consumer by passing on those cost increases.

"(2) Because of most consumers' lack of ability, or motivation, to move to 'off-peak' time of use, their cost will increase, which will be windfall revenue to the electricity producers and associated utilities. One has to question how these windfall revenues will be utilized. For example, will it be used to accelerate the paying down of the huge Ontario Hydro debt?

"Please correct me if my initial premise is incorrect here, i.e. business organizations will be on time of use rates. Otherwise, if you have the opportunity to raise these concerns it will be much appreciated."

That is a concern, and as I mentioned, in talking to businesses like Orr's in Parry Sound, time of use does apply. They're very concerned about how they're going to pay their bill.

Here's another email—this is a cottager:

"We have investigated many ways to reduce our hydro consumption. For some people, the end result will be to sell their cottage. We will wait for a full year of actuals before deciding on any drastic measures.

"Long-term worry: infrastructure. Just not there. Second long-term worry: management. Read recently that

hydro rates are expected to increase as much as 40% over the next few years. That's poor planning and management. It is a sad thing to see this resource-rich province become a have-not because of poor management."

Unfortunately, as of two years ago, we have become a have-not province.

This constituent, a cottage owner, says in this letter to me:

"Dear Mr. Miller

"As a cottage owner in your riding, I was dismayed to discover that the cost of my hydro has increased roughly 25% this year—and that is cost increases, not consumption increases. After some discussion with Hydro One, it seems to me that a disproportionate amount of the increased cost of hydro delivery is borne by cottagers. Hydro One tells me that even though we are resident in the area for about 65% of the year, we cannot be considered 'resident' since we own a property elsewhere. As a result, delivery charges, linked to consumption charges, are twice as high for non-residents than for residents. I am not sure why this is considered fair. When two residences are charged different rates for the same service, that is discrimination, and that is what Hydro One is practising. Since this is legislated discrimination, I'm not sure there is anything you can do about that.

"My reason for emailing you is to point out the obvious flaw in Hydro One's plan from the northern perspective: the impact on northern communities when cottagers can no longer afford their cottage because of high costs due to hydro rates and taxation rates. In my experience, the majority of cottagers are long-term owners who struggle for the privilege inherent in being able to spend time up north. For many of us, this struggle is one we are losing and there will be an inevitable, unpleasant financial impact on the region as a whole.

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"The taxpayers of Ontario have been poorly served by the management of hydro resources in the province and the failure of governments to plan for their long-term availability. Now some Ontarians are forced to bear an unequal burden of the cost of this mismanagement. In the long run, all Ontarians will suffer.

"I find the current pricing practices of Hydro One discriminatory and punitive."

That's a slightly different concern, and I'm afraid Bill 109 will not assist that constituent. So that has given a bit of an idea of some of the emails that I have been receiving to do with concerns about increasing energy costs.

Let me just talk a bit about what this bill is going to do, because, as I said, the other day when the Minister of Finance was speaking, he threw out the \$1-billion figure. This is actually a \$70-million proposal. It changes the old Ontario property tax credit. With that, a non-senior was able to claim up to \$900. So they're playing a bit of a game with numbers, I would say, in that they've taken that amount of the old Ontario property tax credit and renamed this the Ontario energy and property tax credit. So now the maximum you can qualify for, if you're a

non-senior, is \$700, and they're giving you a \$200 energy tax credit. Guess what that makes: \$900. It will make a very slight difference. For some people, it's easier to get the full \$200 versus getting all of the old \$900 of the other. But \$700 and \$200 still adds up to \$900.

Interjection: It's a bit of a shell game.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a bit of a shell game, I would call that, yes.

This program is income-tested so that if you're a single person and you make \$20,000 or less, or if you're a family and you make \$25,000 or less, and the same applies for seniors, then you can qualify for it. For non-seniors, a family or a single person who owns or rents a home would be able to claim an energy amount of up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$50 plus 10% of their occupancy cost, to a maximum of \$700. As I say, that \$200 energy credit plus the \$700 property tax credit comes back to the same total that was in the old Ontario property tax credit.

The property tax amount would not be allowed to exceed occupancy cost. The maximum energy and property tax amounts that could be claimed would be \$900. The total of these amounts would be reduced by 2% of adjusted family net income over \$20,000 for a single person or over \$25,000—so as you have more income, then you get less of a credit.

Then there's also the seniors' part of it. It's the same threshold for seniors. It is \$20,000 for singles and \$25,000—sorry, the income thresholds for seniors would increase from \$20,000 to \$25,000 for single seniors, so that's the increase, and from \$25,000 to \$30,000 for senior couples. That's to get the full amount of the credit.

For seniors, this is the way it would work: Additional benefits would be provided to seniors. A senior family or a single senior who owns or rents a home would be able to claim an energy amount of up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$425 plus 10% of their occupancy cost, to a maximum of \$825. The occupancy cost is equal to the property tax paid and/or 20% of qualifying rent paid during the year. The property tax amount would not be allowed to exceed occupancy cost. The maximum energy and property tax amounts that could be claimed would be \$1,025. The total of these amounts would be reduced by 2%, again, for net income over \$25,000 for a single senior or over \$30,000 for a senior couple.

This also does apply to people who live on a reserve and pay home energy costs, and they have to have some proof of their energy bill.

So that's kind of what this bill is about. It is a relatively modest effort, particularly when you look at all the various ways in which—I have talked a lot about energy having gone up because of all the various costs and pressures, including the green energy tax they put on recently. It's worth about \$50 million; this whole plan is \$70 million.

The HST is huge, of course, and it applies not just to energy bills but affects how much disposable income

people have, because it also applies to gasoline for your car, heating oil and a long list of other things that the old provincial sales tax did not apply to. People are facing so many increased costs, and this is going to be a relatively minor benefit for them when you look at the long list of things.

When the current government came into power, one of the first things they did in their first budget was scrap a seniors' property tax credit that had been put in place by Ernie Eves. If they feel so strongly about it, I'm not sure why, in their first budget, they scrapped that seniors' property tax credit that Ernie Eves had brought into effect. They also scrapped the plan to have tax-reduced zones in the north, which were about to be implemented. In their first budget, they did away with that plan to have tax incentive zones, I guess they were called, in the north. I happened to be at, I think, a FONOM conference in northeastern Ontario when Ernie Eves announced that, and I can say it had a very positive response and that northern communities were looking forward to the benefit of increased economic activity they were expecting from that.

Also in that first budget they cancelled planned tax reductions that would benefit business and create jobs. The corporate tax rate was supposed to go from 14% to 11%. They put it back up to 14%, a 27% effective increase from where it was planned to go down to. They also increased the small business tax. Of course, despite the Premier, in a very well publicized public signing with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that he wouldn't raise taxes—despite making that commitment—he brought in a huge new tax, one of the biggest tax hikes we've ever seen, in the health tax, which people are still paying to this day. Over \$15 billion has been taxed through that new tax.

Of course, most recently, on the same day the new HST was coming into effect, we had the new eco tax. I was surprised at the sort of public reaction I got from constituents in Parry Sound–Muskoka to this eco tax. I think people reacted because they viewed this particular tax as being sneaky. There hadn't really been any publicity about it. The government had been doing a sales job going around the province trying to sell the HST, which was coming into effect on July 1, but we really hadn't heard much, if anything, about the eco tax. Then, all of a sudden, people went to—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Did the member from Peterborough say, "We dropped it"? I think he said, "We dropped it."

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: The member from Peterborough just said, "We dropped the eco tax."

Interjection: They withheld it in three days.

Mr. Norm Miller: That's what I'm talking about: the reaction of the public to this new tax. I think people just viewed it as being sneaky. The government didn't communicate what the tax was about or how it was supposed to benefit the environment. People went to Canadian Tire

and bought something—it might have been a toothbrush; it might have been whatever—and they were looking at the receipt and wondering, "What's this other tax on here?" There was mass confusion. Different retailers were dealing with it in different ways. There was a huge public backlash that I certainly heard about at a local level from people who just said, "We've had enough. Nobody told us anything about this, and damn, here's another new tax." There was a backlash from that.

So, as the member from Peterborough pointed out, they dropped it. Well, they sort of dropped it. They dropped it for 90 days—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: They dropped it for 90 days. It'll be interesting to see the way the government handles that one, but I suspect it will come back and it's going to be totally hidden so we just don't know it's there anymore. We will definitely be watching to see in what form this eco tax comes back. But I think when people can't see any benefit to it that it's going to benefit the environment somehow, then they just see it as being a tax grab.

1500

I've had private members' bills in the past to do with deposit return, where there's some incentive to actually benefit the environment. I had a private member's bill to do with the LCBO deposit return that I happen to think makes sense. In fact, the government actually implemented it the next year. There's some actual incentive, and the consumer gets the money back. They may pay a deposit, but they actually get it back, and there's a benefit to the environment in that that incentive to get their money back causes them to bring bottles back. There are, as has been proven through the Beer Store system of deposit return, very successful return rates—in the high 90%, I think, in the Beer Store.

I've been supportive of deposit return systems where there's actually a benefit, but with the eco tax you couldn't see any connection to a benefit to the environment; you just saw an extra tax.

Part of the reason that this government has been looking at new taxes is because of the state of the finances of the province of Ontario. I just sat through the estimates committee with the Minister of Finance last week, and one of the pieces of information that should be a little startling to Ontario residents in the public accounts is that the government had a deficit of—I think the final number was \$19.3 billion. Actually, it was hard to keep track because it changed so many times last year. They started out last year's budget in March 2009 saying it was going to be—I believe the first number was a \$14-billion deficit in the budget. Then, in June, they revised it up to \$18 billion. Then, in early September, they changed it to \$24.5 billion—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Twenty-four point seven.

Mr. Norm Miller: —\$24.7 billion. Thank you, member from Halton, for correcting me on that. Then, as we got closer to the end of the fiscal year, getting close to March 31, 2010, the number went to \$21 billion, roughly. Feel free to correct me, member from Halton, if I get the

number wrong. Then, in the end, they were all happy that the deficit was \$19.3 billion. Hurray, hurray. This was supposed to have been some wonderful thing.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A record Ontario deficit.

Mr. Norm Miller: And that's a record deficit.

That's one side of it, but the interesting part of it is also, though, that when you look at the public accounts, the actual debt added to the province of Ontario last year was \$35.2 billion in extra debt when you add that \$19 billion and then you add on other debt that they borrowed for capital spending and who knows what else? That's a big number: \$35.2 billion in new debt for the province of Ontario added just last year, with about 50% of it borrowed outside of the country.

I specifically asked the Minister of Finance, "Where is this money borrowed from?" Roughly 50% is from outside the country, and that's Europe and China. It's borrowed around the world and it's got to be repaid. Frankly, I find it a little scary that this government has added that much debt in just one year—\$35.2 billion in just one year in the province of Ontario. That's a mortgage on our kids' future. The pages sitting here: I'm afraid to say that you're going to be paying off that debt as you get into your working careers and pay future taxes to pay off the \$35.2 billion in debt just added this year.

Why are we in that situation? We're in this situation because this is a tax-and-spend government. When they came into power, the budget was about \$68 billion. They've greatly increased spending so that this year it's \$127 billion in spending. That's a huge increase. But the interesting thing to notice is, the revenue for this year is that \$107 billion is projected. That's a record revenue. So we don't have a revenue problem; we have a problem that the government has spent irresponsibly and not tried to control spending at all.

Despite a recession happening, which they've mentioned a lot and blamed for all kinds of things, in October 2008, we haven't seen any restraint from this government. In fact, since 2008, despite having this worldwide economic calamity, they continue to sign contracts with a big part of the workforce of the government of Ontario. About half the budget is wages, and they continue to sign contracts for 2% or 3% over four years.

Only in this year's budget have they said they're going to freeze the non-union wages and start to deal with the unionized part of the workforce and freeze their wages only when the current contracts expire. They signed these three- and four-year contracts that don't expire until after the next election, I think, with the thought that if there are political problems or strikes or whatever pushback from the public sector, that would happen after the next election and not be a problem for them.

We're in the situation we're in because this government has been irresponsible with its spending—a spending problem, not a revenue problem. It's affecting all taxpayers as they're seeing increased costs on the pocket-book and as they're being forced to pay higher and higher fees in new taxes, new fees and new increased

charges on their energy bill. That's the situation we're currently in.

I'm not seeing the member from Durham. I think I will conclude shortly and just say that this modest tax support for the people of Ontario is something we will support, although, as I say, when you look at the total costs that people are facing on their property and energy bills, \$70 million is relatively minor. It is something that we will be supporting, but it won't make that much difference for the people of Ontario.

As I was saying previously, I think the strategy of the government has been to roll these bills out kind of one at a time. They could have had this bill—it was announced in last year's budget—in the spring budget bill. They could have had the child activity tax credit in the spring budget bill. But the order paper is relatively thin, so instead, we're seeing these thin bills roll out one at a time with great fanfare and the government talking about billions of dollars when, really, it's a relatively minor benefit for the people of Ontario.

Apparently the member for Durham is busy with constituency meetings, so he's going to be speaking later. I know he usually likes to speak to any bill and get the voice of his constituents on the record, but other members will be speaking further on to this bill. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to take a couple of minutes to respond to the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, the critic for the PC caucus.

This is an important measure. The parliamentary assistant spent some time outlining the legislation in the leadoff for second reading. I think she did an excellent job of that.

Obviously, we're concerned, particularly about seniors, those with lower incomes, those on fixed incomes, those who may have an element of vulnerability in their income stream. We want to make sure there are provisions in place as we change and structure policy to protect them. We want to make sure there are opportunities for them to offset some of their costs, such as their energy costs, in such a fashion that, as we change, as the systems change, as we restructure the electrical systems into a new economic structure, those who find themselves in a situation where they are likely on fixed incomes or low or modest incomes, we provide some element of protection for them.

That's why, in part, the Ontario energy and property tax credit for seniors is in place: We have adjusted. The critic spoke to some changes in property tax credit systems and energy credit systems over the past number of years, and we have adjusted as we've gone along. We looked at the property tax credit and found that there were adjustments needed on those in the early going. Similarly, we feel it's the appropriate time now to be looking at these adjustments on this side, particularly on the energy side.

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This Ontario energy and property tax credit is going to deliver almost \$1.3 billion in annual support. That's a lot of money: \$1.3 billion to go to Ontario families, primarily seniors, to support them in their endeavour to be able to offset some of the costs they might otherwise endure. This is an increase of some \$525 million compared to the property tax credits that were in place in 2009 and, if passed, some 740,000 Ontario seniors would see an increase in the tax relief it provided for. These are large numbers—billions of dollars, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of seniors and families having an opportunity to see some relief as we all struggle with some of the costs of ensuring we have an adequate, effective electrical system where the lights will stay on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka on his excellent critique of this legislation, which, for those of you who are watching, is the Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

As my colleague mentioned, of course we're going to support it because anything that's going to bring tax relief, insofar especially as it concerns seniors, you've got to be in favour of. But really, the fact of the matter is that this government wouldn't even have brought this legislation in at all if it hadn't been for the huge pushback from the public with respect to their skyrocketing energy prices. That stems from the complete lack of an energy plan, notwithstanding their protestations.

We've got a government here that's completely ignoring the energy needs of this province in the years to come. We've got increases that are going up and up, probably another 25% by this time next year, and they're doing very little about it, completely ignoring the problem and burying their heads in the sand.

So we've got a situation where we've got this legislation before us. It's really a band-aid solution for the lack of attention to the energy sector. As far as the seniors are concerned and the statements that have been made by previous members in this debate about how much this government has done for seniors, well, I would beg to differ when you look at what's happening in our retirement homes right now, where you have people who are left in shocking conditions, when you have people who are without the supports that they need. They're not able to manage in the community. A lot of them are having to go into retirement homes because we don't have enough long-term-care placements available for them, nor do we have enough placements for them in the community. We've got a situation where the aging at home strategy is a complete failure. When you look at community care access centres across this province, they are completely without enough funds to be able to provide the necessary housekeeping, nursing and other services that our seniors require.

So as far as everything this government has done for seniors, I say forget about it. They've done nothing. They continue to hide their heads in the sand.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to thank the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka as well for speaking to this issue and pointing out that at the core of what we're dealing with is a failure, a complete mess when it comes to electricity policy, and an attempt on the part of the government to try and paper that over.

This is a government that has decided to continue with privatization of our electricity system, a government that has made decisions about the technology we use that will make life more expensive for people. This is a government that now is beginning to realize that what it has done to the public, what it has done to Ontario's economy, what it will do to Ontario's economy is putting its political future in jeopardy.

Why is this bill before us? Why are we debating this initiative to provide property and energy tax credits to people of this province? We're doing that because this government even last year when it did its polling—and I'm speculating, because I've never been able to see the polling, but one can only conclude that they looked at what was going on with the public, did the numbers, realized they were in trouble and decided they had to bring forward a program, a bill that would give them political cover.

As you're well aware and as other members are well aware when they talk to their constituents, people are hard-pressed. So I don't think there's anyone in this Legislature who will say, "No, we shouldn't give people this credit." But many of us will say the reason that this is even before us and is necessary is because this government, the McGuinty government, has made a monumental mess of its electricity and energy policies, and the people of this province have been forced to pay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: We're talking today about the enhancements to the Ontario energy and property tax credit for seniors and families. And you know what? I am really pleased that we now have both opposition parties on board, that they understand. I've listened to and understood the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka, and I know that he's fully in support of this measure. Listening to his rhetoric, we're a little bit unsure, but I think that was the message. I just heard the same endorsement from across the floor, and I think I understand why: because this is something that the seniors of this province need.

I talked about the folks in Elliot Lake. The people in Elliot Lake, the people on Manitoulin or maybe the people in Bruce Mines—and I happened to have been at the 130th anniversary of the Central Algoma Exhibition just the other day—would be telling me, and they do tell me, that they appreciate the assistance they are receiving through the northern energy tax credit, which is on top of what we're suggesting today for the Ontario energy and

property tax credit, which will help all seniors in northern Ontario of modest or low income and will help families across the province.

I understand that people have difficulty with property tax and energy costs. In the world we live in, those costs are fixed. You can't do much about them. You can't change. With energy, you can do some things, but with your property tax you are kind of at the mercy of the realities of municipalities these days.

What I would suggest to people—and for those out there watching, you would know that this is good for the people of Ontario. It's good for modest- and low-income people, especially seniors, so I'm pleased to see the opposition parties supporting the government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to respond and thank the members for adding comments.

The member from Pickering–Scarborough East was throwing out that \$1.3-billion figure again, and I point out that this bill is dealing with \$70 million. To bring in a little bit of a comparison, the green energy tax that is added to people's bills is roughly about a \$50-million program. I just wanted to give some sort of scope as to the costs and benefits.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa pointed out that this bill is a reaction, in her opinion, to pushback from the public because of the lack of an energy plan put forward by the current government in the past seven years, and this was more of a band-aid solution to that pushback.

The member from Toronto–Danforth also said that the energy sector is a complete mess and pointed out that the current government's political future is in jeopardy. He suggested that this bill is about political cover, and the polling had something to do with it.

I would ask the member from Algoma–Manitoulin to go check with his government officials, but it's my understanding that the cap that's outlined in this bill for seniors includes any other program they might get, including a northern energy cap—having just been briefed on it last week—which is included in this, so you can't get both beyond the cap that's outlined in this bill. So I would just ask him to go and check the facts on that one and report back to the House, if he would like to do so. But it's my understanding that this cap for seniors—I believe it's a \$1,025 cap, if I'm reading in the right spot here—includes anything you might get from the northern energy program as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today I'll be discussing Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments. Those who have been in the chamber for the last round of questions and comments and those who've been watching on television will know that the heart of what I have to say is that this govern-

ment has made huge mistakes on the energy file; that the McGuinty government has misunderstood, whether it was maliciously or not, what had to be done to make sure that we have affordable, reliable energy in this province, and set out on a number of policy courses that have driven up the cost of living and put people in a very difficult situation. Thus today, we are going through a variety of standard phrases: putting on a band-aid, papering over—take your pick. This government has a political problem and it's trying to address it in part with this bill.

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Why do seniors need this credit? Because this government is hitting them hard, hitting them continuously, and not just on the tax side: It's hitting them on the cost of utilities to keep themselves warm in the winter and at a cool and healthy temperature in the summer. This government has set aside its understanding of what people in this province need and has decided on a course of action that means that you, Speaker, and I and members all around this chamber hear from families about their skyrocketing hydro bills. They see the hydro bills raised by hundreds of dollars despite, in many cases, their best efforts to reduce their energy use. Dalton McGuinty's policies—and I will go into detail in this speech—are driving those increases. Every bad decision by this government means another nickel or dime or dollar on somebody's hydro bill and, I would argue as well, on their natural gas bill. Those nickels and dimes are turning into big bucks, and that's why this afternoon we are in this chamber debating this bill, because people are feeling it.

Over the past couple of weeks we've heard about a billion and a half dollars on the not-so-smart meters, sweetheart private power deals and a decision to let utilities raise their profit margins. All of those things hurt the people of this province, hurt the economy of this province. When you add in Dalton McGuinty's 8% HST, you have a bad mix.

People understand that in this society taxes are how we contribute to the common good of the society itself, but they don't think it makes sense to make it more difficult for people to pay for the very necessities of life. As you well know, people in your riding in high-rise apartment buildings in the middle of the summer facing west find their units extraordinarily hot and they have to air condition those units. Increasingly, those tenants, those seniors, those citizens will be spending an awful lot of money to keep the temperature at a level that allows them to be healthy. Increasingly, not just in Toronto but across Ontario, people will be spending more to keep warm in the winter, a necessity of life in this climate. This government has misunderstood where it needs to apply its charges, and charging more to people for the necessities of life is a profound, fundamental error in policy and in treatment of the population.

Everyone in Ontario needs a break on their hydro bill. This plan is an extremely modest response that leaves most families still struggling to pay their hydro bills. There's very little new here. This proposal, this approach was first brought forward in the March 2010 budget.

There were no funds allocated. This is the first time we actually get to debate this, but it is not the first time it's been put on the table and announced and—what can I say?—not just announced, but announced with fanfare. The second coming has arrived; the people have been saved. That's the attitude of this government when it makes these kinds of announcements.

Seniors need every penny that they can get to pay their hydro bills. Much more could have been done and that's why the NDP is demanding that the 8% HST be taken off hydro bills. Removing the HST from hydro bills puts \$500 million back into the pockets of nearly six million Ontario families and senior households. Our proposal, the repeal of the HST on hydro bills, would save the average family with two or more children about \$135 a year. That's a positive step. That's a step that this government could put in place that would be understood very quickly by the people of Ontario and would benefit them in a substantial manner.

The Liberal policy is one that's in disarray. Over the past three weeks, the NDP, led by Andrea Horwath, has voiced its concerns again and again. Bad policy decisions have been made by this government, and Ontarians are paying the price. This government's energy policy is seriously broken, and with the time that I have today, I want to address a number of these concerns.

Before we talk about things like smart meters, nuclear power plants and all of the technology, all of the hard investments that are made to provide us with electricity, with energy, I want to talk about this government's decision to make American utility companies richer, this government's decision to make all utility companies far more profitable than they were in the past. I want to talk about this government's decision to not only make it more difficult for people to pay their electricity bills but more difficult to pay their natural gas and their heating bills as well, because this government's approach to energy—not just electricity but to energy overall—is to make sure that energy companies are far more profitable than they've been in the past. That has consequences—consequences that this bill, as I've said before, is trying to paper over, is trying to band-aid over, this afternoon.

Last year, the Ontario Energy Board held a hearing to decide if there needed to be any change in what's called the return-on-equity rate. For those who don't follow Ontario Energy Board events closely, and that must be 99% of the population, they were trying to decide whether or not energy companies could make a bigger profit. In Ontario, we've regulated energy. We know that it's central to people's well-being. We know that it's critical to the performance of the economy. We know that because of the way energy is distributed—through pipelines, through wires—it's a monopoly. So there has to be a way for the public to protect its interest when it deals with these energy companies. We've regulated the price; we've regulated the profit that companies can make.

The Ontario Energy Board has determined the amount of profit that these companies can make as a way of saying that if they want to go and borrow money from a

bank or from people who want to buy bonds, they can tell them, "Yes, we're making a very high rate of profit. We're very solvent. You can loan us money. You can buy our bonds." Independent Canadian voices said that no change was needed in the rate of profit, the return on equity, for utility companies. But American experts were brought in by the big utilities who said that profits should be higher and that Ontarians should pay more.

The last time I looked there was still a border, there were still separate sets of laws, and there were separate governments between us and the United States. But the Ontario Energy Board was deeply swayed by these American experts who said that Canadians should pay more so that Canadian utilities or utilities operating in Canada could return higher rates of profit to their owners.

They won; they were successful. The Ontario Energy Board changed the rules so that utility companies can now collect \$240 million and more per year in profits. That's a lot of money. That is a lot of money that goes on for a long time, money that is not something that's subject to the vagaries of budget-making, not something that will be dropping any time soon. If this government has a deficit problem long into the future, this credit may be at risk, but I can tell you right now the pressure of those who own these utilities to continue to crank out profits will be relentless. These profits, this \$240 million a year, is a sum of money that seniors and families will be paying for many years—decades to come. So you have to ask, why on earth should families that are already struggling over money have to pay a higher rate of profit? It doesn't smell right. It doesn't look right. It isn't right for Ontario. It is the wrong decision. It's a direction that this government could have overruled and didn't—has not, has said it won't.

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World-renowned finance experts from U of T and York business schools argued that the current formula for profits was just fine, maybe even a bit generous. The utilities hired American experts who argued that the profits were too low, that Ontarians should pay more. Now I have to say to you, I heard no rumblings of utilities wanting to leave Ontario and go somewhere else and not operate here. It isn't as though they weren't being given the money to actually maintain their power plants, their lines and their transmission system. No, it was their profit that was at issue, not the money to actually make sure the system was working well.

In the end, the energy board that the McGuinty government put in place decided that the American utility experts were right and these poor utilities needed a higher rate of profit. And we are carrying the burden for that and our budget is going to carry the burden for that, trying to ameliorate, trying to soften the blow that seniors and families are going to feel from those higher costs.

We don't understand why \$240 million more is coming out of the pockets of hard-working Ontarians just to make sure that utilities are more profitable, and it isn't just the NDP that finds this puzzling, finds this a wrong step, a misdirection for the province. It's no wonder that

polling shows that most Ontarians think Ontario is headed in the wrong direction. It's decisions like this that say to people, "My interest, our interests, are no longer being looked after."

But it isn't just folks in every day lives who feel that way. Groups as diverse as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre have all written to the minister in the past week or so voicing their objection to the decision. I'd like to read from these letters because I think people need to know what others are saying. The Consumers Council of Canada, September 24, 2010, in a letter to Brad Duguid, said:

"Dear Minister:

"The Consumers Council of Canada ... is very concerned about the decision of the Ontario Energy Board to allow utilities to increase their return on equity to 10%"—their profit. "The issue has now been raised in the Legislature.

"The consumer council believes the threshold question is whether publicly owned utilities should be allowed to earn a" return on equity. "Public utilities are just that—public. They have little or no risk. The money thus earned is a hidden and regressive tax. Their shareholders are their customers, city or provincial taxpayers who are already paying increased rates to cover the costs of a variety of initiatives.... Fairness to consumers should be the guiding principle. The OEB sets rates based on a complex formula designed to ensure that utilities cover their costs (which include a return to their shareholder—the city or province). Now it seems those costs have just gone up, and electricity consumers will pay yet again.

"Consumers don't object to paying reasonable costs to ensure the lights are on and the environment is not unduly damaged. We rightly expect the OEB to be looking out for our interests as the regulator of public utilities where decisions should result from a fair process, one that allows a searching examination, in this case, for increased" return on equity. "The Ontario Energy Board allowed for the increase in the absence of a balanced process and based its recommendations on the fact that private US firms are somehow comparable.

"The Consumers Council of Canada urges you to review the recent decision of the Ontario Energy Board in the light of the fundamentally flawed process through which this decision was made. Any decision affecting rates requires a proper hearing, which, in turn, allows cross-examination. That was not done in that case. Ontario consumers deserve better."

I think they put it well. Why has the rate of profit been increased for these companies that are not in a situation of great risk; where, in fact, things are very stable? They are providing a utility service; they are not subjected to a wave of competition the way you would be in some other industrial sectors. Yet the return on equity, their profit, has been doubled, from about 5% to 10%.

It is not good public policy. It is not good for the people of this province. It is why a property tax credit is

called for, but it is also what is driving people's need for that kind of tax credit.

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, September 28, 2010, to the Honourable Brad Duguid:

"Dear Minister:

"Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters ... writes to support the calls for a review of the Ontario Energy Board's December 2009 report on the cost of capital for Ontario's regulated utilities made by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre ... and the Consumers' Council of Canada ... in their recent letters to you.

"Any equity return being achieved by Ontario manufacturers in the current environment of ever-increasing energy and utility costs is rapidly eroding. In these circumstances, it is of considerable concern to CME that the equity returns allowed to Ontario utilities should be materially increasing.

"Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters agrees with the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and Consumers Council of Canada that the board's recent cost of capital report is the result of a fundamentally flawed process. Moreover, the question of whether publicly owned utilities that do not raise equity in the capital markets should be permitted to recover costs of equity that they do not incur is an issue that needs to be scrutinized in a proceeding that allows issues of fact and opinion to be fully tested under cross-examination.

"It is unclear to Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters why publicly owned utilities should profit from assets acquired with funds provided by taxpayers when the board itself has ruled in prior cases that utility investments funded by taxes should earn no return.

"Moreover, the Ontario government has recognized that the source of funds invested in utility assets is an important matter to consider when establishing utility prices. A backgrounder issued by the Ontario government on February 23, 2005, when it established prices to be paid by consumers for electricity produced by the regulated assets of Ontario Power Generation Inc. ... stated as follows:

"The prices on OPG's regulated assets are based on projected costs of operation plus a 5% return on equity.... While the standard ROE for North American utilities is 10%, a 5% ROE will generate revenue to service the OPG debt held by the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. while putting significant discipline on OPG to contain costs and improve overall operating efficiencies."

"For all of these reasons, CME urges the minister to take action to redress and mitigate the harm that the board's cost of capital report is causing to manufacturers and other consumers.

"CME would be pleased to meet with you or your representatives to discuss this matter."

Signed "Ian Howcroft, vice president, Ontario division."

Then, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, September 27, 2010, to Mr. Brad Duguid regarding "Ontario Energy Board decision EB-2009-0084, cost of capital for Ontario's regulated utilities:

"The recent media coverage of increases to the financial return of public and private utilities in Ontario has highlighted a significant and flawed decision of the Ontario Energy Board that is unnecessarily adding to the financial hardship of increased energy rates by Ontario consumers. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre ... represents the Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition in the Ontario Energy Board. PIAC also provides legal representation and research on behalf of ordinary and vulnerable consumers of other important utility services. We participated in the proceedings that gave rise to the decision in issue and would respectfully request your assistance in this matter.

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"In 2009, the OEB commenced a proceeding to review its formula-based return on equity ... for public and private regulated gas and electric utilities. In the course of the proceeding, the board held a consultative conference that was supposedly to examine whether the original formula was still working well.

"Strict limits were put on costs incurred by ratepayers' representatives to produce evidence for the conference that was to answer a series of questions put by the board. Conversely, the utility stakeholders introduced extensive cost-of-capital evidence in the proceeding that went well beyond the questions supposedly in issue and was directed to the issue of what the actual change should be.

"Notwithstanding the fact that there was no evidence of any difficulty that Ontario utilities were experiencing in accessing capital markets for financing, the board elected to make a significant change in the formula in favour of the regulated utilities. In its decision, the board noted that because the expert retained by the ratepayer representatives had not done the extensive empirical analysis the utilities' experts had done, it could not rely on his recommendation. The expert had not done this work because he had been limited in the scope of the board's own directive.

"The board decision thus surprisingly decided to both determine that the formula needed to be changed and to actually make the change in the formula without a full hearing, and without the ability of ratepayers to have full, independent, expert evidence before the board and to conduct cross-examination. Even more surprisingly, in the teeth of a recession, the board found that fairness to these utilities meant enriching them by some 150 basis points in" return on equity "largely on the basis of comparisons to US utilities historically rejected by previous boards. The end result means an eventual increase of an estimated \$285 million in rates annually that will go ... to private and public shareholders.

"We do not believe that the board's report of the board of EB-2009-0084 on cost of capital for Ontario's regulated utilities should govern the future setting of" return on equity "by the board. The conduct of the hearing giving rise to the report did not meet the requisite standards of fairness, and led to a one-sided result. We believe this is an issue that the minister must act to redress. We believe that pursuant to section 35 of the act, the

minister should ask the board to examine this issue of the appropriate" return on equity for Ontario Energy Board "regulated utilities, following a fair and full hearing of evidence.

"We would be pleased to meet with you or your representatives to discuss this matter....

"Yours truly,

"Michael Janigan

"Executive director."

The simple reality is that this government has decided that in a choice between the public and the utilities, it sides with the utilities. That has consequences in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year for the people of this province. That has consequences for the well-being of seniors who need to keep warm in the winter, need to have their refrigerators running, need to have air conditioning in the summer and, at the same time, need to pay either their mortgage or their rent. Those seniors are hard-pressed. Those families are hard-pressed. This bill simply is giving with one hand while the other hand has been very extensively clawing back. That is the reality of what we are dealing with today in this Legislature when we look at the larger picture that this bill sits within.

I've been speaking primarily about electricity, but don't forget that people in this province use natural gas to heat their homes, to do their cooking and to dry their clothes, and that natural gas and its costs are hitting people hard as well. And further decisions by this government's energy board have been driving up the cost of people's home heating, driving up the cost of people's living.

A few years ago, the Ontario Energy Board allowed utility companies that were able to store natural gas to pass their costs on to the public. I will quote from an article, again, by Michael Janigan from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. He wrote:

"Over the last two decades, governments and regulators, in Canada and in most of the developed world, have moved to replace state regulation of important public utilities, like telecommunications, energy and airline transportation, with competition whenever there has been an opportunity to do so....

"The proponents of this change (usually the utilities themselves) have persuaded many governments to favour, by statute, market forces over regulation as the preferred choice for providing consumer protection." As you well know, there is a lot of tender mercy in market forces when it comes to consumer protection. In fact, the quality of that mercy is rarely strained. "But what happens when such a choice does not benefit consumers but actually costs them" much more—"a billion dollars more over 10 years?

"This is the choice that the Ontario Energy Board has recently made in deciding that the natural gas storage market is competitive.

"For most customers, a squabble over gas storage seems somewhat remote. In fact, gas storage is needed to serve all customers and is an important component of a

customer bill. Gas is stored in the summer and withdrawn for the increased heating needs of winter days.”

The pipelines that come to Ontario from Alberta can’t carry all the gas we need in the depths of winter. So the simple reality is that it comes to Ontario, goes to southwestern Ontario; there are large caverns, and it’s pumped into those caverns; and then, in late December, in the depths of January, that gas is pumped out to make sure that we’re warm.

“Both of Ontario’s local gas distribution utilities, Enbridge Gas Distribution and Union Gas, have developed storage facilities located in Lambton county near Sarnia. Both companies did so by getting approval of the Ontario Energy Board to make their ratepayers responsible for the cost of development and the operation of the storage.” So you, Speaker, and everyone in this room who, for the last few decades in Ontario, has been paying their gas bill, paid the cost of setting up that storage, making sure it was well maintained, making sure it was available there for us on the cold days when we needed that gas to keep us warm.

“While Enbridge uses all its storage for its franchise customers, Union has an excess amount over what is needed to serve its franchise customers. This storage is in high demand. Union sells this storage to marketers like BP Canada Energy or other distribution utilities, including Enbridge. The price that is paid for this excess storage by these customers is some five to six times the rate that is based on actual utility costs currently paid by Union’s franchise customers. Because Union ratepayers have paid for, or are financially responsible for, this storage, they have in the past been credited with most of the revenue from these outside sales of excess storage,” but not any more, not under the McGuinty government. Under the McGuinty government, money that would have flowed back to customers to help keep down their heating bills so that they could keep warm in mid-winter no longer goes to them.

“Notwithstanding the huge difference between storage prices at cost and on the open market, the Ontario Energy Board decided that sufficient competition existed from storage sellers in the secondary market outside Ontario to deregulate storage services offered by Union and Enbridge. The board conceded that there would likely never be a competitive market for storage available to Union’s residential customers.” After all, so few of us have giant salt caverns located in our backyard. They’re just not everywhere, as you well know, Speaker.

1550

My guess is that there are none in your riding. My riding is surprisingly deficient. There are only a few places where they exist; they are owned by a few hands, and thus that ownership gives access to very large quantities of money, because as you well know, in mid-February, in mid-January, we are very much driven to be warm.

So these customers who depend on that storage will pay a cost-based rate. However, the money from the outside sales of storage, developed and paid for by Union

Gas’s Canadian customers, after a brief transition period—I imagine it sitting in a bank account—will all go to Union’s Texas-based American owners, Spectra Energy, formerly Duke Energy. I’m sure people have heard of Duke Energy; I’m sure people have heard of Spectra. At current storage rates this will amount to a loss of over \$100 million per year to Union customers, who will have to make up for this loss in their rates, \$100 million that used to stay in Ontario’s economy now extracted out of Ontario and shipped to Texas. It’s almost a replication of what happened over most of the 20th century, when money flowed into the United States to pay for hydrocarbons, fossil fuels and fossil fuel services. Once again Texas is able to take money out of Ontario for energy costs.

Enbridge customers will be paying an additional annual \$40 million of this amount for the storage that came from Union. That’s a lot of money. If you’re in the Enbridge service area, part of your bill pays for storage that you’ve already paid for out of your rates and is now just going to make sure that Spectra Energy is far more profitable than it otherwise would have been.

“While the customer financial impact is jaw-dropping,” writes Mr. Janigan, “the kicker is that this billion-dollar giveaway involves existing natural gas storage and will not help at all to build more storage that might drive the price down.” Why would Spectra Energy or Union Gas take the money that it had extracted from Ontario to build more storage? No, they’re just going to make more money on the assets they already own that were paid for by you and me and the other people of Ontario through their natural gas bills.

This government, the McGuinty government, has been moving forward with making sure that utilities can make more profits and making sure that deregulation allows more money to flow out of this province, out of our wallets, out of our household budgets and to Texas. No offence to Texas; it’s not a bad place, but I would rather our money stayed here.

“It’s possible that the Ontario Energy Board,” writes Mr. Janigan, “felt hamstrung by the statutory requirement to prefer competition to regulation. However, this reverse Robin Hood result cannot be what the government intended for Ontario consumers. This is particularly the case when these consumers are facing rising energy costs for real system needs in the form of conservation and new supply. There’s also no precedent in North America and other Commonwealth regulatory jurisdictions for a decision to deregulate where there are only the prospects of increased costs for consumers.”

That’s why we’re regulated in the first place: because there wasn’t an alternative. We don’t have two sets of gas lines running through our cities. We don’t have 20 different storage caverns located around Ontario. There are only a few. There is one set of gas lines. Consumers are limited in their choice and thus regulation is needed, and when regulation is turned on its head so that protection is for the gas company and not for the public, then we pay, and we pay in a substantial way.

"Petitions filed by industrial and residential consumer groups to review the OEB decisions"—at the time of this writing, 2008—"are currently in the hands of the McGuinty" government. "The Ontario government must decide if it is in the public interest, or even in accordance with competition principles, to charge Union customers an additional \$100 million per year with no offsetting benefits." It doesn't sound like a good deal to me. Someone else may well think differently, someone who's a Premier. Maybe Premier McGuinty thinks it's a good idea that we pay an extra \$100 million to pay for something we've already paid for. Whatever the current trends in utility regulation, it seems reasonable that customers should always get what they have already paid for.

Well, I know you, Speaker, will be shocked—and it's a good thing that you're sitting down—to know that, in the end, the McGuinty government didn't overturn those decisions. It decided that \$100 million more a year going to Spectra Energy was a good thing. Although we raised questions in the House, although Public Interest Advocacy Centre and others said, "What are you doing? Give your head a shake," there was no change. That decision went forward to the detriment of the people in this province, to their cost in their pocketbook.

When we talk about making a mess of the energy file, when we talk about the McGuinty government misunderstanding what people need to have done, when we look at the difficulty people have with affordability and when we look at this bill today, we shouldn't be surprised, because decisions that were made over the years to enrich those companies at our expense are coming home to roost.

I just want to note, before I go on to my next item, that the estimated amount of Union Gas revenue from the sale of excess storage came to \$125 million to \$150 million a year. The Union customers would have gotten a credit for a chunk of that in the past on their gas bills worth about \$94 million to \$113 million per year, or about \$72 to \$115 per customer per year. The effects of the decision will be fully phased in by 2011.

We've been talking a lot about electricity, and I'm about to return to electricity. But one should not forget that we need natural gas as well, and those who receive these property tax credits—as I assume this bill will be passed and put in place—are going to be hit by their other utility bills as well.

Let's go to electricity. There's a reality about our electricity system that the real investments started over a century ago, and we have built a system over the past 100, 110 or 120 years that has provided Ontarians with electricity throughout the province. The system is aging. Technology is changing. We went from a system that, at the beginning of the 20th century, was primarily coal based, one that was dependent on coal from Pennsylvania, one that was shut down by the big coal strike—I think in 1904 or 1905. It was called the great coal famine. We went from that to a system that was primarily and overwhelmingly dominated by hydroelectricity that was publicly owned. That system provided Ontario with the muscle to industrialize. That system provided us with

energy, with electricity, at a cost that allowed manufacturers to set up here and compete with American manufacturers and build the kind of life that we like to live here in Ontario. The system has aged, and technology has changed. We are at a point in the history of this province where we have choices to make about the kind of technology and kind of ownership we engage in to make sure that we have power for another century.

This government could have taken a path, in looking at the renewal of our electricity system, that would have had conservation and efficiency at the core, the most environmentally beneficial and the lowest-cost, most job-generating option before us. They could have put that at the core of their policies, but they didn't. They could have decided that it's time to move on technologically, because if we replicate the system that we had in the 20th century, we are stuck with a wide variety of costs for building distribution lines and transformer systems that would be very differently shaped, configured and sized if we had a very different electricity system. We could have had a decision not to further privatize power, Bruce Power being a case in point and gas-fired power plants being a case in point. We could have continued with the decisions we made in the 20th century that actually made Ontario prosperous and made it a place that was attractive for investment. But they in fact decided to take a very different course of action. They decided to roll the dice once again on nuclear, to make big investments in gas-fired power plants and to have some green window dressing with a small part of our energy to come from renewable power, and there are consequences to the decisions they made.

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I want to start first with the whole question of energy conservation, because energy conservation is the only option we have that is as cheap as the coal-fired power we need to get rid of. Energy conservation is the cheapest option we can implement in Ontario—one that we need to implement.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario was charged with providing a report to this Legislature on a regular basis about the progress of conservation in Ontario. His first report came to us in May of this year, and it's not a bad report. In his executive summary, he talks about the major issues that need to be addressed. He says that the first thing Ontario needs is a comprehensive energy conservation strategy. He says, "Several other provinces and Ontario municipalities have energy conservation strategies but Ontario does not."

My goodness, one would have thought, by the way the McGuinty government speaks, that it had a strategy, but the Environmental Commissioner, looking at the documents, has said that in fact there is not a strategy. Now, I agree with him, having myself tried to find a strategy that this government has and not having found it. But it's nice to have the Environmental Commissioner confirm that one does not exist.

He writes, "The strategy should provide a definition of conservation to guide the measurement of progress; it

should set objectives and targets as appropriate; and, the strategy should co-ordinate government-wide initiatives. Development of the strategy should incorporate public comment by posting it on the province's Environmental Registry."

What we have had are ad hoc approaches to energy efficiency and conservation, we've had announcements, we've had recycling of announcements, we've had commemoration of and hailing of announcements, but we haven't had a strategy: a comprehensive approach to reducing the cost of energy for you and me and people across this province; a comprehensive approach to making sure we have the energy we need to power our lives, to power our economy. That's missing. That's confirmed by the Environmental Commissioner.

Now, the Environmental Commissioner has commented on some of the conservation performance, even within that ad hoc framework. I think his commentary is very interesting. He actually requested from the Ontario Power Authority their documentation and their reports, and I'll read what he has to say: "Pursuant to its new reporting mandate, using our authority to request information, the ECO sought information on the status of the directives"—instructions from the Minister of Energy to engage in conservation and efficiency. He said to the OPA, "Tell us what you've been directed to do and how it has worked out."

"According to OPA-supplied information," the Environmental Commissioner "believes that achievement of the directives"—the instructions of the minister—"and, by extension, government policy has been mixed and in some cases underwhelming." He goes on to say, "With one exception, the directives that specified programs with attached savings have achieved only part of the specified amounts. In some cases, no verified savings at all are reported." So the thing that is the most cost-effective, the best for our environment and our economy, and the approach that should be at the centre of Ontario's electricity strategy, the Environmental Commissioner, to be generous, finds wanting.

He talks about a few directives put out by the Minister of Energy: October 2005, the low-income directive. What, in fact, we have is that three megawatts of the 100 megawatts of savings for low-income and social housing has been achieved, "although the ministry has equivocated between assigning responsibility for this sector to the OPA and undertaking the initiative itself." So the target was 100 megawatts and they achieved three. I have to remark that that doesn't sound like a roaring success to me. It sounds like they missed. It sounds like they missed in an area where people are already vulnerable, already have low incomes, are already hard-pressed by energy bills. Of a 100-megawatt target, they only made three megawatts.

March 2006: the residential and electrically heated homes directive. Zero megawatts of the 150 megawatts from conservation in the residential sector in electrically heated homes has been achieved—zero megawatts; nothing; nada. They were given a directive, they were

given instructions to reduce energy consumption in that context and they did nothing—zero.

March 2006: commercial buildings and municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals directive. Zero megawatts of the 150 megawatts from conservation in commercial buildings and the municipalities, universities, schools, hospitals has been achieved.

So, three out of 100 in one program, zero out of 100 in another, zero out of 150 in another. You can see that there is a pattern here of failure to actually achieve what needs to be achieved.

I'll read further what the Environmental Commissioner had to say: "The minister has not enforced compliance where the OPA has not completed or made progress on transition directives within a regional time frame." In other words, instructions are sent out, I assume, on paper; the paper lands on a desk, and there it is housed; there it happily nestles down, waiting for another layer of paper to be laid over it and yet another until the layers grow thick and solid, perhaps insulating the desk from the heat of the sun—I don't know. But in terms of actually reducing energy use from the instructions the minister has issued: No, not an impact. And frankly, the minister's office doesn't follow up. Maybe it's not a priority for the minister.

The Environmental Commissioner goes on to write, "There appears to be no specific mechanism for the minister to enforce directives." How about that? When he gives a directive to the Ontario Power Authority to reduce energy consumption, he doesn't actually have a mechanism for following through to see that anything happens. That's not an instruction; that's a wish. That's a, "Gee, wouldn't it be nice if we had less energy use in our colleges and universities," with no follow-up, no enforcement, no real action. That has been the fate of what should be at the core of the province's electricity program; not at the periphery, but at the core, and at the core there's simply emptiness.

There was another interesting piece in this report. Everyone should read this report. The Environmental Commissioner is very dry in the way he writes these things. He writes that the ECLA, which was passed by this government in 2006, "had many of the same enabling provisions as the GEGER, including: the ability to require public agencies to develop conservation plans...; the ability to override restrictions on the use of conservation technologies; ... the power to require home energy information upon property sale.... Yet in the three years between the passage of the ECLA and its replacement by the GEGER, the only action taken by the government was one minor regulation that overrode the barriers to the use of clotheslines. While laudable in principle and ambitious in scope, the ECLA"—very ironically named—"had minimal influence on energy conservation in Ontario." There's a very jolly picture in this report of laundry on a clothesline.

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When you go for three years with an act whose only impact on energy conservation is to make it legal for

people to use clotheslines in areas where previously it wasn't allowed, you have to say that the government is no longer following this issue; that it is not paying any attention to it; that in fact it has decided that its least-cost, most beneficial option is not one that's a priority for it; and that in fact it sees it as a nuisance, as a pain, as a distraction from what must be, really, their more serious concerns, which my guess is, making sure that there are enough gas-fired power plants and nuclear plants in this province.

I just want to note two other things the Environmental Commissioner said. I don't have a lot more time, but I want to say this: If you don't make the right decision when you decide how to deal with the electricity system, it's very pricey, and it has been very pricey. You are well aware of that. Everyone in this chamber is well aware of that.

When the Environmental Commissioner reported on why it is exactly that local distribution companies, local utilities, building operators aren't saving a lot more energy, he sat down with them and said, "What are the things that are standing in the way? Why is it that you can't make life more affordable for people?" What did they have to say? Local distribution companies said, "There's a lack of regulatory clarity and continuous long-term commitment to energy conservation in government policy."

Well, I say that, and it's seen as simply partisan. The Environmental Commissioner has identified it as a significant barrier to local public utilities delivering the goods. Unless people on the government benches have a credible reply, I think that stands as a statement about, really, where their money is and where their mouth is, on this issue.

When he talked to building operators about why it is we're not seeing a lot more energy conservation there, he said that capability in the buildings sector is a barrier. Ontario is not creating the capacity to design, construct and operate green buildings.

We do get one-offs. Every so often when a building is being built that meets a relatively high standard, there's a lot of noise made about it, but frankly, it should be so common that it just passes unnoticed, that it's part of everyday life, but it isn't. In Ontario, the capability to design, build and operate green buildings is profoundly lacking. That's in the government that goes about building a culture of conservation, but doesn't actually put in place the infrastructure to deliver the goods on the ground and in the buildings that we live and work in.

One thing that was very interesting in what he found was that financial barriers exist to motivating conservation in the broader public sector; the money saved as a result of energy efficiency improvement does not stay in the sector.

So if you're managing a university and you're able to cut your energy use by 10% or 20%, that money is taken out of your budget. You put in the capital, but you don't get to keep the savings. So you have a disincentive to actually reduce energy consumption. Bad policy—expen-

sive policy for all of us. We pay taxes to operate our public buildings. If they aren't energy-efficient, we pay more than we should be paying because energy is being wasted. Because what we have in place is a system that discourages public sector managers from actually making buildings energy-efficient, we are paying more.

It comes out, as well, when we build new buildings. We try to build them as cheaply as possible. We don't build them on the basis of what their long-term operating costs are or how we can make sure they don't use too much gas and electricity in the future. No, we build them so they are as cheap as we can—and we get stuck with the long-term operating costs. Not wise at all.

We have a problem with a government that doesn't understand how to put together an electricity strategy and ensure that we have affordable electricity in the long run, but we also have a problem with a government that doesn't understand that public power has been the difference between industrialization and non-industrialization in this province.

Bruce nuclear—the leasing of a publicly owned power facility to a private company—is a case in point. As you are well aware, and this came up recently, last summer, 2009, the contract was rewritten between Bruce nuclear and the government of Ontario. That rewrite led to roughly \$50 million a year more going to Bruce Power to pay for power.

I've always heard that the reason that private companies should have higher rates of profit is because they take a risk. There's an electricity market and they're in there and being entrepreneurial and gutsy, and apparently also making sure that their profits are guaranteed—not just guaranteed, but boosted. When you look at sources like the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario website, who went into some detail about how Bruce Power did very well out of that deal and how we, as power consumers, are going to pay more, then you have to ask yourself: Why is it that a private company gets treated like a public utility? Why is it that they get guaranteed profits? Why is it that in a society where demand for electricity in the last years has dropped sharply, their profits are guaranteed by us? If you're going to guarantee profits, why don't you just own the thing? This government's decision to proceed with privatization, and acting in a way, when it comes to these companies, that makes sure that we always take the hit and they don't, has not served us well.

All of these things aggregate together and I'm sure there will be other opportunities to speak at greater length about this bill. There are other points that I would touch on if I had another hour, but I'm not actually requesting one. I'll get to that.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes, I know. I appreciate the assistance from my colleague.

I'll say this: This government has made decisions around technology and around ownership that have driven up the cost of electricity and gas, have driven down our standard of living. Today we are dealing with a

bill that will address a very small part of those losses, a bill that nonetheless, I would say, all parties will probably pass because the people of Ontario need at least a bit of relief back from the decisions, the mistakes—the extraordinarily expensive mistakes—made by the McGuinty government. This is going to be very expensive for them a year from now. It's very expensive for the people of Ontario today. They won't forget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The Conservatives and the NDP speak as if we lived at the far end of a time tunnel back into the 1950s or the 1960s. I liked Ike and I liked JFK, too. I definitely thought that Pearson was an upgrade over Diefenbaker, but that was then and this is now.

They compare energy today with what energy cost half a century ago. I ask: Where are energy costs going everywhere in the world today? Straight up. How do our energy prices compare with energy prices in the industrial heartland of North America, the Great Lakes states and the Midwest? We're the cheapest.

We ask, then: Is this the same PC Party that wants to bemoan paying 65 cents or 80 cents per kilowatt hour for feed-in-tariff electricity when, on its watch, it paid more than a dollar per kilowatt hour for peak power, which it then added to the stranded debt that all of us are paying? Enough. We're here to do the right thing. We're here to do it in the right way. To help Ontarians of modest means, the province has a new energy and property tax credit. If you're a senior on a fixed income, there's an additional senior homeowners' property tax credit; and for every qualifying individual, there's an annual \$260-per-year sales tax credit.

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Let me quote to you from the current edition of the Economist magazine, October 2010, with regard to wind power: Texas in the US "already leads the nation in wind power capacity, and in 2009 some 6% of its electricity was pulled from the air."

The cost of energy is rising on the 21st-century side of this time tunnel. Those of us who do not comprise the Flat Earth Society side with Ontario families, not with the two parties opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talks about this electrical situation that the Ontario government has gotten itself into, which is, indeed, dire straits. The former member mentioned that we have low-cost electricity in Ontario. I'm not sure that could be documented with any degree of authenticity.

I heard from a very good source that last month the state of Massachusetts purchased a 20-year supply of electricity from the province of Quebec for six cents a kilowatt—20 years, six cents a kilowatt: I think that's probably a pretty good price.

I think we have to ask ourselves in this province, what is our purpose in this province? What is the purpose of our electricity? Why do we want to have electricity? We

want to supply electricity, certainly, to homes and businesses, and we want to do that at the lowest cost that we can possibly do it so that our businesses can be competitive in the North American marketplace. It seems to me that six cents from the province of Quebec compared to 81 cents for solar energy or 30 cents for wind power—I'm not sure the two equate, and I'm not sure that the purpose of the government is to experiment in these new forms of electricity generating.

It would be wonderful to have experimentation on solar energy. I'm not sure that 10 megawatts, which I think the government is working on—I think that might be a little large in the experimental area. I think it's costing the province of Ontario too much and I think it's costing the people who use energy in this province too much, and it's driving businesses out of Ontario. I think that the government should reassess what the purpose of generating electricity in this province is and what the end use of that energy should or could be.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to enter into this debate and make a few remarks on the comments made by our colleague from Toronto–Danforth.

Certainly, I'm proud to be a member of a government that has decided to tackle the energy crisis that we were left with in 2003. You will recall the great blackout that summer in August: no power across a large swath of Ontario, and a government that had not planned appropriately. So we have, in fact, put in place our Green Energy Act.

Rebuilding a system, as we are doing now, is obviously a costly enterprise. People understand that. There is an impact on individuals. With this particular bill, Bill 109, with our energy tax credit for seniors, we are helping those on fixed incomes and most in need.

I'd like to tell the member from Toronto–Danforth that I attended, with the member from Vaughan, a meeting with a seniors' community centre in the riding of Vaughan just last Friday. The room was absolutely packed. These were seniors on a limited income who obviously wanted to stay in their own homes as long as possible. We were commended for what we've done on the property tax credit—the fact that it was, in fact, doubled in 2010. Many of the people there were the beneficiaries. They understood that what we were doing with this particular bill, Bill 109, was targeted to specifically help them. They appreciated that.

I'm absolutely convinced that this is a bill that needs support from every member in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I listened very intently to the comments that were made by the member from Toronto–Danforth, and I thought he made a number of very good points, one being the necessity to consider conservation as a serious part of our energy platform as we go forward and this government's failure to make any real difference in terms of conservation measures.

But of course, that doesn't say it all. We need to have an energy policy that makes sense in this province, and I think that's why we're in the situation we are in, where we need to give credits to seniors and people living on fixed incomes: because this government has failed so disastrously to create a balanced energy policy. Of course, we should be investing in renewable energy—that only makes sense—but we need to have it balanced.

We need to recognize the fact that industries need large sources of power, and so we can't neglect other types of energy sources—nuclear, in my mind, being part of that mix. That's why we've gotten to the situation where we are. We're paying large amounts of money for renewable energy, and as a result, we're seeing more and more businesses in particular struggling with energy costs. We're seeing businesses, even in my riding, that only operate at night; they can't operate during the day anymore. They're operating on such slim margins right now that it's possible that they may not even be doing business in the province of Ontario in the next few years.

What we haven't even considered in all of this, too, is the number of businesses that have been turned away from looking at Ontario as an attractive place in order to do business because of our lack of a comprehensive energy policy. I don't know that we're ever going to be able to quantify that. We can certainly take a look at the businesses that are going to be leaving Ontario. We've seen business after business close up in the last year or so, but we're going to see that happen in the future. We can only ask ourselves, why aren't businesses looking at Ontario in the future? One of the major reasons is going to be because of the high cost of power, and we need to do something to reverse that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Halton, Oak Ridges–Markham and Whitby–Oshawa for commenting on my remarks.

No one sees 1955 as the peak of energy technology. The world has moved on, and it has moved on in substantial ways. That's why, when I talk about the change in technology, I recognize that it's time for us to move on from nuclear. It's no longer cost-effective, if it ever was. It's no longer where the world is going in terms of developing new technology.

As we tackle the energy crisis, as we tackle the costs of an aging system, we have to make the right decisions, because, as you well know, \$1 billion doesn't fall into your lap every day. We've spent \$1 billion, \$1.5 billion or, in one rough calculation, more like \$2.5 billion on smart meters. But smart meters are extraordinarily limited in what they can do. The reality is that most people's ability to respond to the smart meters is limited by the amount of money they have in their pockets—which, to tell you the truth, is increasingly diminished—and limited by the kind of lives that you have to live when you're raising kids, when you're on the move, when you've got a job.

When we spent \$1 billion or \$1.5 billion in scarce capital on a measure that had very little positive impact on people's lives, as opposed to spending \$1.5 billion to actually cut their energy bill by making their homes more efficient, we wasted that money. That is a burden that is laid on the backs of ratepayers and citizens across Ontario.

This is a longer debate, and it will go on for days, but what the government has opened up is a very broad range of questions that we all have to address.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased this afternoon to have a little bit of time to provide my comments on this particular piece of legislation, Bill 109, the Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

I've been sitting here for most of the afternoon, and when I arrived today—as most people will know, this is a proposed credit. Clearly, on our side of the House, we're very hopeful that both opposition parties are going to find the capacity to support this when we get to third reading vote. From what I'm hearing, it sounds like that in fact might be the case, so we look forward to having their support on this particular piece of legislation.

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I think for those who have followed the goings-on in the Legislature perhaps closer than others, they will know that this particular piece of legislation had its genesis some time ago. I'm going to give a bit of background on where we were and how this got started.

Some will remember that it was actually in 2009 that we allocated about \$750 million to the property tax credit. That credit was for low- and middle-income Ontarians, and exactly how much you would have received was based on a formula involving your income and how much you had paid in property taxes or rent—I think it's important to remind people who are following the debate that not only does this credit apply to those who own a home, but it also applies, should it pass, to those who pay rent. As well—a further piece of that—it's important to note that people who live in a long-term-care home will be eligible for the energy component of this particular credit. So there are a couple of extra pieces that I think people need to be aware of.

Under the credit in 2009, singles who earned under \$20,000 and couples or parents who earned under \$25,000 would have been eligible for the full credit. That's the 2009 position. What we have now is a new announcement today—this is the new credit that we're now discussing—and that tax credit will be enhanced from about \$750 million to about \$1.3 billion. These changes will primarily impact seniors. We're raising the income threshold for seniors. Single seniors who earn \$25,000 or under will receive the full credit, and senior couples who earn \$30,000 or under will receive the full credit. So we're increasing the threshold for those two groups by \$5,000 per category. This is going to extend the credit to

740,000 seniors in the province of Ontario, so we're building on our support to them.

The amount you receive on the credit is going to be phased out gradually. Like most credits, this is income-tested. This isn't unusual. It's a progressive way to implement a tax system, and we're doing that with this credit as well. So two cents on every dollar you make over the threshold is when you will begin to see the phase-out: approximately \$20 per \$1,000 or so.

In total, the Ontario property and energy tax credits will benefit 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians. The enhanced credit will work like the current credit. The first payment will be a lump sum, but after that, beginning in July 2011, the payments will be staggered so that people have access to the money when they need it. In the same way that the Ontario sales tax credit and HST rebates were staggered, people will be receiving cheques throughout the year.

I'll now talk a little bit about non-seniors. We're going to see where a family or single person who owns or rents a home would be able to claim an energy amount of up to \$200. In addition, they'd be able to claim a property tax amount of \$50 plus 10% of their occupancy cost, to a maximum of \$700. The property tax amount would not be allowed to exceed the occupancy cost. The maximum energy and property tax amounts that could be claimed would be \$900—this is for the non-senior category. The total of these amounts would be reduced by 2% of the adjusted family net income, as I mentioned earlier.

Additional benefits to seniors: A senior family or a single senior who owns or rents a home would be able to claim an energy amount of up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$425 plus 10% of their occupancy costs, to a maximum of \$825. The property tax amount would not be allowed to exceed the occupancy cost. The maximum energy and property tax amounts that could be claimed would be \$1,025. So this is very significant. The total of these amounts would be reduced by 2%, again, as I just said in the previous categories. So this is indeed significant, and that's why we feel it is important to bring this legislation here, and we're very excited that it sounds like we're going to receive the support of the opposition parties on this credit.

I would say that in my seven years here—and I'm sure that for members who have been even longer than that, and there are many who have—very few issues tend to grab the attention of the public in Ontario like issues around electricity costs. I understand that, and that's fine. That's why I think, when we on this side of the House have the opportunity, that we get our feet as often as possible and speak directly to this issue.

Just last week—this one is, I guess it's fair to say, easy messaging for the opposition parties and something they can have a lot of fun with. We acknowledge that over here. It's easy to talk about tax increases. But unfortunately, what it seems is happening when this issue is debated is that the other half of the story is not being told.

Just last week I had the opportunity to be back in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. The Premier was there for almost a full day; we had a great day. The NOMA conference was on—the Northern Ontario Municipal Association. At the same time, the leader of the third party was in Thunder Bay. She took the time to hold a press conference—as is what they do, and that's fine—and she talked about the impact of HST on hydro bills. Of course, that's all she talked about.

This is the other half of the story that I made reference to earlier in my remarks. They don't talk about the significant package of tax reforms that were introduced at the same time as the HST, thereby leaving out the full story. This property tax credit that we're talking about here today, as I've mentioned in my opening remarks—and it was important to get it on the record. We're talking about, for seniors and non-seniors, the energy component being up to \$200, just in this credit alone. When the member from the official opposition from Parry Sound—Muskoka spoke, he made reference to the fact that the northern energy credit, which is additional to what we're talking about today, was not available to people who would be receiving this particular credit.

We took the time to check. In fact, it's information that is wrong. In fact, the northern energy credit can be stacked on top of this credit so that seniors and homeowners and renters in northern Ontario not only will be able to get up to \$200 on this credit that we're discussing here today, but they as a single will be eligible for a further \$130 credit and they as a couple will be eligible for an additional \$200 credit. It is indeed very significant.

People are calling this “modest,” but that's when they only talk about the one credit, and they're linking it all the time back to the impact of the HST on hydro bills and the cost of living. They're talking about it as being modest in isolation. But that's why I referenced the northern energy credit, and that's why I referenced earlier the significant package of tax reforms that were introduced at the same time as the HST. They want to talk about the hydro bill and the ability of families and homeowners and renters in the province of Ontario to manage this cost.

One of the other significant tax reforms we brought in when the HST was introduced was a 1% reduction in the personal income tax rate of everybody in the province of Ontario, up to almost \$37,000—\$36,000 and change; so I'll round it up to \$37,000. That 1% reduction for those people in the personal income tax rate means \$370 to them. If you're a couple and each of you is earning \$37,000, that 1% reduction in the personal income tax rate means \$740 to you. If you earn \$25,000, you get \$250; if you earn \$30,000, you get \$300; if you earn up to the maximum of \$37,000, it's \$370. Why is that important? Because when they talk about the HST and the impact on the hydro bill, they don't talk about the other tax reforms that we've brought in.

Let's think about the \$370—if you're a couple, \$740 back in your pocket if you're both earning \$37,000. To use up \$100 of what we just gave you back—and I'm

speaking directly to the people in the province of Ontario. It's important that if they're going to remember anything about this debate, they might remember this piece. To use up \$100 of tax relief that our government has given you through various measures, you have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously exempt from the PST. So if, by example, we use for the case of round numbers your hydro bill, which is the focus of the opposition parties, and if for the sake of round numbers we say that your hydro bill last year was \$1,000—some people are paying more; we get that—but just for the sake of round numbers to give the example: If you paid \$1,000 on your hydro bill last year, the 8% PST, as a result of the harmonization of the sales tax, will add \$80 on your hydro bill. That's if you spent \$1,000 to accumulate an \$80 expense. I just explained that if you earn \$37,000, you're going to have \$370 more, and if you have a partner who's earning \$37,000, they're going to get \$370 more. That's \$740; you had to spend \$1,250 just to use up \$100 of it.

Today I'm talking about two other credits here. The one we're talking about here today, called the Ontario energy and property tax credit, will give seniors and non-seniors an additional up to \$200 more of energy tax relief. As well, people in northern Ontario, if they're single, will receive up to \$130 more, and up to \$200 if they're a couple.

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I think it's important that, after everything has been discussed on the tax piece, on the effect on hydro bills, we try to remember, with hopefully some clarity, that little example that I have laid out there for people when it comes to the language and the rhetoric that's often used by the opposition parties to make this look, in my mind, much more onerous than perhaps it really is.

Now, much of the focus on this particular credit has been on the energy part of it, and I think it's important that we remind people about the record of the other parties when they had an opportunity to manage the energy file. When the NDP were in power, two things of note, I would suggest, occurred.

Interjection: Only two?

Mr. Bill Mauro: There were many more things, but two things of note.

Energy prices in the province of Ontario under the NDP went up by about 40%, give or take. One of the things that I remember very clearly, that perhaps is even more egregious, is that under the Peterson government in the late 1980s, they had negotiated a deal to bring in 1,000 megawatts of very affordable, very clean and very renewable energy from the province of Manitoba—1,000. The deal was signed, and in the early 1990s under the NDP government, for their own reasons, which I'm sure we might hear a little bit about today, they cancelled that deal, which would have brought 1,000 megawatts in through northwestern Ontario and which would have been a huge, huge construction project for northwestern Ontario. They cancelled that project. That energy would have been online, had it gone forward in the early 1990s,

somewhere around the year 2000, and the province of Ontario would have had the benefit of that power for around 10 years now. But they made a decision to cancel that project. We all have a history when it comes to managing power in the province of Ontario.

I listened to the member from Toronto–Danforth, who has a long history with these issues. With respect, I'm having a hard time understanding exactly where he is on it. He speaks very clearly and very often in opposition to nuclear. He spoke, perhaps not as directly, but indirectly, in opposition to the decisions that we've made on green energy. He has spoken very clearly against gas-powered energy, and he has spoken, obviously, very clearly against the use of coal. Well, we've got to make a choice.

The member from the official opposition, in his response to the member from Toronto–Danforth, talked about Quebec selling power for six cents a kilowatt hour—I think he said it was to Massachusetts—and compared the energy rates in Quebec to the energy rates in Ontario. Well, we all know that Quebec has always been cheaper. We wish we were that low. It would be wonderful. But we also all know that, in Quebec, they're blessed to have the vast majority of their energy needs met by hydraulic power, and most of that hydraulic power has been in place for a long time. They're blessed that way, just like we could say about British Columbia as well. They've been very fortunate.

I will also talk a little bit about the position of the official opposition when it comes to this as well. Previous speakers have spoken on this, and we listen to them respectfully when they get up and make their comments on our position on the energy file. But, again, many of us will remember as well, when we came into this position in 2003, what had occurred before we got here. That was that the Conservative government of the day was breaking up the old Ontario Hydro into four or five different private corporations and that the market would rule, that everything was going to be great. The free hand of the economy was going to make everything good. We'd have lots of power. It would be cheap. It would be affordable. More supply would come online—as is, I would say, their ideological predisposition, and that's fine. They took that approach. It's not an approach I would favour.

I think that if you go back to the Margaret Thatcher days, if they had paid a little bit of attention to what went on in England when that approach was tried, perhaps they would have seen that it was disastrous. It did not work well. But anyway, they went forward with it. Well, what happened there? That experiment, I guess we would call it, didn't work quite so well.

In very short order, I think it was November 2002 when the market was open, the Conservative government of the day reversed their position in terms of allowing the free market to reign when it came to energy in the province of Ontario. They reversed their position and brought in a rate cap, because when they allowed it to go to the free market, as was predictable to almost everyone except them, prices spiked. There were concerns about demand. There was no investment being made in infrastructure. I

can tell you, as somebody who lives in northwestern Ontario, when they tried to sell off Hydro One, the transmission infrastructure in Ontario—and the Conservatives were trying to do that—that concerned me greatly, because I'm not sure what private sector company would be able to find an appropriate rate of return on their investment, when you think about the infrastructure required in northwestern Ontario to supply electricity. I'm not sure how well that would have been maintained. But in any event, they changed their position. They flipped on it and they brought in a rate cap.

They've been talking to us about the price of electricity that we are now charging here in the province of Ontario. They capped it, as I recall, somewhere around four-point-something cents; I think perhaps 4.3 cents, give or take. They capped it. Well, the result of the cap was what? Stranded debt. The Conservatives made a decision, when they saw the folly of their way on the free market when it came to electricity, to cap the price so that the ratepayer, on their bill that arrived at their door on a monthly or a bimonthly basis, would not see a dramatic increase in price. But what was happening, of course, was that the true cost of electricity was not being paid for off of the rate base, but that the cost of electricity was now transferred to the stranded debt. And so a bulk of what exists there—I'm not sure what that number is; it's in the tens of billions. I hear different numbers from time to time, so it's hard to know exactly what the number is. It's significant, and we do know that that decision added a significant volume of money to the debt.

The Conservatives made a decision that they didn't want the ratepayer to pay the price, the true cost of electricity. That was their approach; we have had our approach.

I think, as you heard the member from Mississauga say earlier, every government takes a different approach to this. The prices that we are charging today in Ontario are being compared to prices that we were being charged 10 and 20 years ago. I'm not sure how anybody expects that to remain the case.

What we do know over here, on our side of the government, is that this is very important. We understand the value of affordable electricity, especially, I would say, to large industries in Ontario. It's why, for about four or five years now, we have been bringing in very affordable pricing programs to support large industry in Ontario. It's why in this budget of 2010 we further enhanced those programs significantly: a \$450-million energy support program for large industry in Ontario; a three-year program at \$150 million a year. There is more good news on that front. I think that we've announced that we haven't done a good enough job of communicating to the public in terms of support for large industry—I think up to 230 or 250 of the largest energy users in the province of Ontario—that we will do a better job of ensuring that people are aware of in very short order.

I can see my time is almost up. I think it's important. I would hope and repeat that people will remember the entire package of tax reforms that we have brought in over

the last year and a half or so, remembering again the one example that I put on the table: personal income tax reduction. It's 1% on the first \$37,000, or \$370. If there's a couple in the same home, that's \$740 in your pocket. If your energy bill was \$1,000, the HST adds 8% to it: That's \$80 over the course of a year, if it's a \$1,000 bill over a year. We just talked about \$740. You have to spend \$1,250 to use up \$100 of tax relief.

The sky isn't falling. We recognize the importance of this issue to the ratepayers in the province of Ontario, to residential users and to industry in the province of Ontario. It's why we've taken the significant steps that we have on the tax reform side as we go forward on this front.

I look forward to the remarks from the members in the opposition and look forward to addressing them with my two-minuter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, the sky is falling. As the member wrapped up his remarks, he said, "The sky isn't falling." I'd like to tell him that the sky is falling because of the policies of the McGuinty government, where you're going out and purchasing solar power for 80 cents a kilowatt hour when we're paying six cents a kilowatt hour for in it our homes. Add the figures up. It doesn't make sense.

As well, I'd like to point out to the member opposite that the stranded debt was not created by the last government. The stranded debt was created by the Peterson government from 1985 to 1990. I remember; I was sitting in opposition at the time. I couldn't believe the amount of money—something like a \$15-billion overrun on the Darlington nuclear plant. Their incompetence led to a huge, huge debt on Ontario Hydro at the time.

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As well, at that time, they had another hare-brained scheme, and that was the introduction of non-utility generators, where they signed, like they're signing today, 20-year contracts for power produced by natural gas generators at 12 and 13 cents a kilowatt hour when power was selling for four or five cents a kilowatt hour. Unfortunately, these long-term, 20-year contracts for buying power at 80 cents—40 cents, in some cases—per kilowatt hour are mortgaging the future of our children.

This government has made a bed for itself with regard to the misplacement of any logic towards our electricity supply. It's not only going to hurt seniors in their homes, residents in their homes, but it's also going to hurt the future of our economy and jobs for our children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened with interest to my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. He goes on, over and over and over again, about tax credits. But there's a big problem. You see, people can't afford to pay their hydro bill now, today. They're not talking about a year from now or a year and a half from now; they're talking about today. People can't afford to pay their hydro bill

today. Where I come from in northern Ontario, they've already turned their heat on, and they can't pay their heating bill.

What is the response of this government? It is so typical of the McGuinty government to promise people that something will happen in the future; that next year, people will get a tax credit, or that next May, people will get a tax credit. But people can't pay their hydro bill now. They can't pay their heating bill now.

We've had many nights where we've already had frost. If you can't pay your heating bill, and the temperature is down below zero—I don't know about members of the Liberal government, but you've got serious problems, and telling people, "We promise this will be taken care of next May" or "This will be taken care of in the election a year from now," doesn't help pay the hydro bill or the heating bill today.

Let me tell you what happens when you can't pay your hydro bill: You get a bigger hydro bill. Then you are told to pay a security deposit, which in some cases is in the thousands of dollars. And people don't have the money now.

That's the problem with this: another promise to do something in the future when people don't have the money now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: We don't have to go up north to start the furnace already, according to the member from Rainy River.

Interjection.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes. We've already started it down here too.

I have to compliment the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for a very eloquent and detailed—details of the bill here.

I have to say that in my area I have a very large population of seniors: seniors as individuals and seniors as families. I can't imagine either a family or one of those seniors saying that almost \$100 a month in property and energy tax relief is not going to help them. Of course it is. I'll tell you, it is. It's a big help.

If we are saying, "It's not enough," well, maybe it's not enough, but given the tough time that we have ahead of us, and with the prices of everything going up, we have to face ourselves, and they understand the fact that, yes, things are going up. If they have to make a reasonable living, things are going up. If we have to have availability of power so we can turn the heat on, then, yes, indeed, we have to pay for that as well. At least we have the luxury, you may call it, or convenience that we can just turn on the switch and say that at least we are comfortable. So not to appreciate that \$100 a month at most for our seniors, that it's nothing—I think we have to recognize that even in the circumstances, it's a big help. I think because the government recognizes the need out there, it is doing this. I hope that as we move along, we may continue to assist and improve the situation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, Kenora—Rainy River and York West for their comments.

In regard to the comments from the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, my reference to the stranded debt did not say that the Conservatives started the stranded debt. What it was meant to do, I think I pretty clearly stated, was exhibit the policy position that they took. They tried to hide the true cost of power from the ratepayer by transferring it to the stranded debt. They had gone to a free market. It didn't work. They capped the rates at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. "What the hell are we going to do with this? We're going to transfer it to the stranded debt." That's what that point was. And that's what they did. The record is clear.

The member from Kenora—Rainy River talks about next May, next month. No. In my 20 minutes, I had an opportunity to put on the record a couple of the examples of reductions that are in place now. I focused very clearly on the personal income tax reduction that took effect on January 1, 2010, fully nine months ago. We're three quarters of the way through the year. People who are eligible for that in a home, if there are two people, at \$37,000 a year, might have 600 bucks of that in their pocket already. So it's not about next May. It's there now. It's already there, as well as the transition cheques, the first of which went out in July, some people receiving significant amounts—well, everybody receiving a good chunk of money on that one. So already there has been significant relief.

I want to thank the member from York West as well, who pointed out very clearly that the maximum under this particular credit that we're discussing today is \$200, but even if you get a reduced amount, even if you only get half of it because your income is higher and even if you're only eligible for \$100 of that credit, you're going to have to spend on energy \$1,250 before you use up that \$100 of the credit.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased and honoured to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak in the Legislature on behalf of my constituents in Wellington—Halton Hills, to speak to Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments. This bill was introduced in the Ontario Legislature by the Minister of Finance on September 28, 2010, and, of course, we are now engaged in second reading debate.

I will say from the outset that it is my intention to support this bill when it comes to a vote at second reading, but I would also add that it would be my expectation that the government will want to send this bill to committee, most likely to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, for further discussion, perhaps public hearings, so as to ensure that we get this right and that

there aren't any drafting errors or there aren't improvements that might be forthcoming and might be possible.

Let's look at what this bill does. In looking at the explanatory note, it says:

"The Taxation Act, 2007 is amended to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit announced in the 2010 Ontario budget. The Ontario energy and property tax credit will apply for the 2010 and subsequent taxation years and will have two components: a property tax amount and an energy amount. For 2010, the tax credit is claimed in income tax returns filed by qualified individuals for the year. Starting in 2011"—of course, that's an election year—"the Ontario energy and property tax credit is calculated using income information from income tax returns filed for the previous year, but is payable directly to eligible individuals in four quarterly instalments during the second half of the year and the first half of the following year."

Of course, the cheques will ostensibly arrive in people's mailboxes just before the election. Isn't that cute?

Again, the position of our caucus has been very eloquently stated by our party's finance critic, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, who did a good job this afternoon. But of course, it is our view that this act expands on the current property tax credit and adds a new energy tax credit for low- to middle-income Ontarians.

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In the first year of implementation, the Ontario energy and property tax credit would be provided after people file their 2010 tax returns in 2011. Beginning in 2011, the credit would be paid quarterly, like the Ontario sales tax credit. The program is intended to be administered through the Canada Revenue Agency, but I suspect there will be included in the cheques a little message from the Premier of Ontario, Premier McGuinty, informing people that it is through his government's policy that the cheque has arrived in their mailbox.

Interjection: I don't think he'd be above such things.

Mr. Ted Arnott: No, I don't think so either.

This is important to point out and important to note for people who are listening: The increases in hydro are estimated to drive up household hydro bills by 43% by 2015, adding another \$732 per year to an average household hydro bill. Of course, we've seen a number of policies by this government which have had the effect of driving up the hydro bills in the province of Ontario. People are very concerned about this in my riding, and I'm sure the government members are hearing the same expressions of concern from their constituents as well. I can't believe that they're not hearing about it. People are very, very concerned.

As the member for Rainy River indicated earlier during the course of this debate, many people are unable to pay their hydro bills. Certainly, I'm hearing that in my riding, too. In fact, I first started hearing serious concerns of economic anxiety related to the cost of living and related to the cost of many government programs and so forth when I started to open the responses I had received

to a survey that I included in my most recent newsletter, which came out in the springtime. A substantial number of respondents—the vast majority, in fact, who expressed their concerns—were expressing severe anxiety about the costs of living, in particular the HST, but also the cost of electricity and a number of other essentials that are in their household budgets.

We see that this policy and this tax credit is an admission of an unaffordable, failed energy policy. We support this bill because we believe that Ontario families and seniors need any tax relief that they can get, however minor.

I want to compliment the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, who in an intervention this afternoon, in a two-minute response to one of the speeches that had already been presented, pointed out the fact that the current government's energy policy, whereby they're paying some electricity generators up to 80 cents a kilowatt hour, yet are charging the consumer less than six cents a kilowatt hour or thereabouts, is an economically unsustainable energy model that is going to be forcing future generations, in many cases our children or our grandchildren, to pay for these failed energy experiments of the McGuinty Liberal government. He also pointed out—and I thought it was important that he pointed it out—the fact that the Darlington nuclear station, which was built over the late 1980s and came online in the early 1990s, had extraordinary cost overruns, largely due to political interference from the Liberal government of the day, the David Peterson government. That's a fact as well that contributed significantly to the stranded debt problem that Ontario Hydro has had ever since. So those are important points.

This is now, I think, the fourth week that the Ontario Legislature has sat since we resumed sitting for this fall sitting of the Legislature, and I would argue that the McGuinty Liberal government is in neutral. Where there should be action, there is instead complacency. Where there should be prudent planning for the future, there is instead fantasy. Where there should be forthrightness in terms of the challenges we face, there is instead obfuscation. We see huge problems in terms of the government's policy and the challenges that the provincial government is facing in the months and years ahead, huge problems in terms of jobs, huge problems in terms of the economy and the management of the economy by government, high taxes, high cost of living, rising hydro costs and rising insurance costs, and a huge deficit in the range of \$20 billion, without a credible plan to get us back into the black.

Of course, the provincial budget—the government is compelled, actually, by the legislation that we put on the books. If they run a deficit, they have to articulate a plan to balance the budget over time and eliminate the deficit. If you look at page 48 of the budget papers document, you see that they claim and purport to have a plan to eliminate the deficit by 2018. But if you look at the assumptions, they're very interesting, because it demonstrates that they would have to hold program expense

increases to below 2% per year after 2013. This Liberal government has not ever done that. They haven't even come close to that. In fact, their spending increases on average, even in good years, were 7%, 8% a year, well in excess of inflation. This government is not predisposed towards holding spending to below 2% per year. They will not. They don't have the stomach for it. They don't have the backbone for it. They're not going to do it. So that demonstrates that this so-called plan to balance the budget, eliminating the deficit by 2018, is a fantasy and it shouldn't be taken seriously by the people of Ontario by any means.

Because this is a budget bill—as we know, we have considerable latitude on debates on budget matters. This is a budget bill that arose originally from the 2010 budget, so I think it's important to talk about some of the other external budgetary issues that we're facing in the province of Ontario. Certainly, the government members who have spoken to this bill have spoken at great length about some unrelated issues with respect to this particular bill but related to the general budgetary policies. So I would ask for your indulgence in this respect.

I think it's important that we point out during the course of this debate, and we will continue to point these issues out over the next 12 months, I have no doubt, that the McGuinty government, of course, when it comes to taxes, promised not once but twice that they would not raise Ontario's taxes. After they were elected in 2003, they immediately brought in the health premium—so-called; as the Minister of Finance of the day called it. Really, it was a brand new provincial income tax. It was absolutely brand new, but they tried to call it a premium. It was the largest single tax increase in history. And, of course, in 2010 the HST kicked in on Canada Day, which is the largest single sales tax increase in Ontario's history.

We all recall Premier McGuinty, during the election campaign in 2003, in the main ad that the Liberal Party put on the air, where he sat before the camera very quietly, in what appeared to be a sincere voice, saying, "I won't raise your taxes." Of course, he's broken that promise twice in a huge way, which has contributed to the loss of confidence in the government. As we know, approximately three quarters of Ontarians today believe that there needs to be a change of government in the next provincial election.

Another important issue that needs to be brought forward during the course of this debate is the CAS funding, allowing CAS officials to drive gas-guzzling SUVs and take out \$2,000 gym memberships.

Of course, we have the eHealth scandal that we all recall, where \$1 billion was expended on endeavouring to set up an electronic health record for Ontario patients. The Auditor General of the province of Ontario eventually weighed in on that and demonstrated how hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money was wasted with very little to show for it in the end.

We have the Green Energy Act, which continues to be a subject of debate in this Legislature. The Premier re-

versed his decision regarding mandatory energy audits after public and stakeholder outcry. There continues to be a huge issue in many ridings across the province, many of the ridings held by Liberal members of provincial Parliament, where there are wind farm proposals that are pitting neighbour against neighbour and causing a very serious outcry in rural Ontario, where we see that many communities are struggling with the issue. Hundreds or thousands of people are attending public meetings to express concern.

When I listen to my constituents about the proposal, two broad themes emerge: number one, people feel that their local decision-making authority has been stripped away by the Green Energy Act; secondly, they also believe that there may be serious health impacts. I realize that the chief medical officer of health a few months ago did a rather quick survey of the existing medical literature on wind farms and in fact brought forward conclusions that I'm sure pleased the government. It is also true that the government is currently funding a significant health study over a three-year period and spending hundreds of thousands of the taxpayers' money on this, so obviously the government is prepared to concede that there might be a health concern, there might be a health issue that needs to be studied.

1710

That being the case, would it not be prudent that the government would await the results of that health study that it has commissioned before it goes whole hog into expanding the wind farms the way that they appear to be wanting to do? I think that most people would conclude that it would be prudent to wait until that health study is completed. Certainly, that was the subject of a private member's resolution that I tabled in this House. It was actually Bill Murdoch, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who first brought forward this issue. And I know that a while ago we had an opposition day motion on this subject and, of course, the government voted it down.

We also see that under this government, senior executives of the OLG were charging expensive meals, alcohol and gym memberships while failing to protect lottery ticket buyers from being defrauded by retailers. Recently, there was another example, a very high-profile example, in the newspapers about that issue. Obviously, there are still huge problems at OLG in terms of how insiders have been able to defraud the system, and I would encourage the government to take greater steps toward solving that particular problem. We also know that during the midst of the Canadian auto crisis, the OLG had the gall to advertise a contest giving away German-made vehicles.

We look at the WSIB, another important responsibility of government—managing the WSIB, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Of course, businesses large and small pay premiums to be administered by the WSIB, which, in turn, is charged with the responsibility of compensating injured workers. Both the chair and the CEO of the WSIB charged expensive trips, meals and a GPS system to taxpayers.

Then we see the deficit. I made reference to it earlier, but of course the deficit this year is around \$20 billion—still amongst the highest deficits ever in the history of the province—under this government, and still no plan to get us out of it that's true, accurate and has credibility. With that deficit financing, that means that Liberals are spending \$2.8 million an hour more than they're taking in—\$2.8 million an hour, every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 12 months of the year, 365 days of the year. All of this mountain of debt is being added to the burden that our children, our grandchildren and subsequent generations are going to have to pay.

Looking at the tax collector severance issue—and this is something that I had a chance to point out in the Legislature back in March. We discovered and learned that the staff that were going to be transferred from the provincial Ministry of Revenue to the Canada Revenue Agency to work for the federal government with the introduction of the HST—that their employment would be transferred. They weren't going to miss a day of work. In many cases, they probably weren't even going to be moving offices, because I suspect, in some cases, the office leases were assumed by the Canada Revenue Agency. Some of them would have had to get new business cards, perhaps, but they weren't missing a day of work. In spite of that, many of them received substantial severance; the government, I'm told, paid out \$25 million in severance to provincial tax collectors who did not miss a single day of work. It's hard to explain that one.

The Ombudsman: Of course, we've seen unprofessional and crudely executed smear campaigns to oust the current Ombudsman, André Marin. In spite of the efforts to try to embarrass Mr. Marin, the government finally had a change of heart and decided to reappoint him.

We have here the G20 issue: During the summer, we had the G20, and if it wasn't bad enough that the Premier quietly created a new regulation, the Toronto police chief then incorrectly communicated the regulation. Neither the Premier nor his minister clarified the regulation to the public. We're not done with this issue either, and I'm sure that there's going to be more discussion and debate on it until we get the truth and the real answers behind what happened with respect to that particular issue.

Then we have the Super Corp. issue. As we know, the government was so desperate for money that the Minister of Finance mused about selling off the OLG, the LCBO and possibly parts of Ontario Power Generation, merging them all together into one big company and then trying to sell shares in that.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They were going to sell Niagara Falls.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's possible that they were going to sell Niagara Falls; we don't know.

To make matters worse, they paid expensive consultants to look into it only to retreat once the initiative became public.

Then we have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I know it's late in the day, but I would ask that members give their attention to the speaker from Wellington-Halton Hills on both sides of the House. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm sure they're enjoying it as much as I am, and I appreciate their indulgence in listening to what I have to say.

Of course, we have the eco tax, which I assume is about to hit the papers again—because remember when that little surprise hit the taxpayers of Ontario on Canada Day, the government decided to retreat. I listened to the Minister of the Environment of the day do his press conference, when he had to explain and answer questions on it. I felt sorry for him, in fact, but shortly thereafter he was removed from that position and moved into another portfolio. But it is the stated intention of the government to come out with a replacement to the eco tax, and I think the time is coming up very soon as to when that—it would appear the government is committed to doing an eco tax, but it just wants to bury it somehow.

We see the issue of the hidden hydro tax increases. The Green Energy Act allows a \$53-million increase in hydro charges that will mean a minimum 25% increase in hydro bills, and that is even before the HST is added.

Then we look at the microFIT program. The government told ground-mounted solar power producers that they would be paid 80 cents a kilowatt hour, then slashed it to 58 cents, betraying rural Ontario. I remember that issue, obviously, from the summertime and the outcry that we had in the land. They said that it was the responsible thing to do, and then there was one more flip-flop a few weeks later when they bumped it slightly higher to 64 cents. What a complete mess the government had on its hands, and it was one that it created.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Certainly the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has a petition that he has launched calling for an election. I suspect that that petition will generate enthusiasm and support all across the province, including the ridings that the Liberals hold currently, because certainly I've been hearing since May from my constituents. The most persistent question I hear from people wherever I go in my riding is, "When is the next provincial election so we can get a new government?"

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: In terms of energy policy and, more specifically, electricity policy and electricity pricing policy, there are many things which my colleague in the Progressive Conservatives stands for that New Democrats would fundamentally disagree with, but I do think we agree on one thing that he highlighted in his speech, and that is that there have been a number of decisions made over the last seven years by the McGuinty Liberals on the hydroelectricity front which have resulted in people having to pay hydro bills that are totally unreasonable.

People are paying for the bloated, multi million dollar salaries of some of the electricity executives. People are

paying now for an electricity system that doesn't have one bureaucracy, not two, not three, not four, not five, not six, but seven, and they're also paying for the large, private, profit-driven entities that are now part of the system. People are paying for something that I think we can all acknowledge now are not-so-smart meters, which are costing well in excess of \$1 billion to put in place, but the net result is, people's electricity bills are skyrocketing.

I want to commend my colleague from the Conservative Party on this narrow front for identifying a number of those areas where people are having to pay for policies that were clearly mistaken and for decisions that clearly are not supportable, and people shouldn't be forced to pay for those kind of things.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to offer a response to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. I was able to be here for about half of his 20 minutes.

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I guess it really doesn't come as much of a surprise to me that, generally speaking, I suppose, the Conservatives are not in favour of green energy. I will say that I was surprised by the comments of the member who did the one-hour leadoff from the third party, from the NDP, in terms of his comments around green energy. I would have expected that the NDP would be more supportive of green energy than apparently is the case, but it's not a surprise, necessarily, that the official opposition does not support it.

Again, if that's the position you're going to take, that's fine. If you want to have a debate around the fact that perhaps the price point for wind or solar is too high or too low or just right, I think that's a discussion that anybody is willing to have. But I think that to take a position that does not support the efforts that are undertaken to establish a green industry in the province of Ontario—I'll characterize as unfortunate.

I would also suggest that it's important that people know that the total amount of megawatts that are going to be generated from green energy in Ontario, whatever that price point is, it's not the price point that you pay on your bill. That's going to be 10% or 20% of the total energy generated in Ontario. That will be fed into the pooled price and the price will reflect an increase as a result of those higher prices, of course. Some people seem to be playing a bit loose with the language in terms of trying to convey to the public that the price point on green energy is the price point on your bill, and of course that's not the case.

On the credit that we're supposed to be discussing, I didn't hear much discussion on that from the member. The little bit that I did hear was the continued attempt to minimize the impact of this \$200; if you're halfway through in terms of eligibility, \$100 for energy support just on this one credit. You have to spend \$1,250 just to use up that \$100 and of course, that's not all we're offering to people in terms of tax relief.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's clear that everyone in this Legislature is in favour of green energy, but the problem that the government has got itself in is that they've done it at any cost; not at a prudent cost, not at a cost where we can afford to go into the next decade and provide jobs and the economy for our kids and our grand-kids.

The United States of America has 500 years of coal in the Pennsylvania-Ohio belt; 500 years of coal to produce power. We can't control what they do in that area, but if they can produce coal power at three cents a kilowatt hour, then our economy is going to have to compete with that in some way. So there is pressure upon the government to make prudent investments in any kind of green energy enterprise that they get in, and they're just experimenting. They're paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour. They're paying 43 cents a kilowatt hour. They're paying 13 cents a kilowatt hour, not only today but for the next 20 years.

What I'm saying is, we are all for green energy, but we are for prudent, logical, rational green energy, and if we have to buy power from Quebec at six cents a kilowatt hour, that makes a heck of a lot more sense than paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour for solar power in our climate, which is just ludicrous.

They try to portray us as not being friendly to the environment or concerned about emissions, all that kind of thing. We are, but we think we can do it smarter and we think we can do it better. We know that it can be done better, and that's why we have to change this government next year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity.

There's this constant bantering back and forth about green energy and what's taken place, what hasn't taken place. One of the concerns that bothers me is that one of the first things that the government did when it first came into power is they cancelled one of the committees: the joint committee between the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Natural Resources. It was a joint committee that was established—and actually I know quite a bit about it. It took several attempts before it actually came to fruition. What that was designed to do was—there are about 2,800 dams in the province of Ontario that are completely underutilized or not utilized in any way, shape or form. The first thing that happened was, the committee chair came to me, after losing government, and said that they'd shut down the committee. Here was an excellent opportunity to utilize energy that's out there and available now, but it was never taken advantage of.

In regard to Bill 109, we constantly hear bantering back and forth about the tax credit. The reality is, there were going to be some significant impacts on individuals, predominantly seniors, in the province of Ontario. If you take a look at seniors—who are at home during the day,

when we fully expect that the smart meters will take effect and these individuals will be utilizing energy at peak-cost times.

Quite frankly, it's good to move forward. We see unanimous consent; I'm hearing it pretty much from everybody. Let's get on with it, pass the bill and move on. Get it to committee if it needs to go to committee, and then we can move forward with some other issues and really deal with the issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington-Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I certainly want to thank my colleagues who have responded to the remarks I put forward. As I say, this is essentially a budget debate, because it's a budget bill. I would use my two minutes to continue to call upon the government to respond to important issues in Wellington-Halton Hills.

We need a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the future, and we need the government's approval to move to the next stage of planning.

We need renovation to the Georgetown hospital. We need a small capital grant to allow for the new emergency department renovation as well as to make room for the new CT scanner.

We need the Highway 6/Morrison bypass to be built around the community of Morrison and Puslinch township, south of Guelph.

We need assistance to improve our ambulance service in the eastern part of Wellington county, in the Erin community, and we need help from the provincial government to encourage the city of Guelph to come to the table and work with us toward those solutions.

We need new long-term-care beds, and we need more effective management of the long-term-care system by the province of Ontario, in particular by the Minister of Health.

In the town of Halton Hills, whose council is very concerned about the Places to Grow policy of the government, we need assistance in terms of intervenor funding for the potential OMB hearings that will result from the Places to Grow decisions that the government compelled the town council to take.

We need new infrastructure money for communities like Centre Wellington, a community that has about 100 bridges, many of which are in a state of repair that will require assistance to ensure that they are safe.

In the town of Halton Hills, we have a need for new arenas in Georgetown. The council has provided great leadership, but the provincial government needs to come to the table.

We need assistance with respect to tourism, and we need greater leadership from the Ministry of Tourism to help bring people to our communities across the province of Ontario and in particular to the areas I am privileged to represent.

So we need greater action from this government, and we'll continue to call for it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I'm pleased to have a few minutes to debate this legislation.

More specifically, I'm pleased to have a few minutes to talk about the context in which it occurs, and the context is this: It doesn't matter where you go in Ontario, people are shocked at the explosion in their hydro bills. People who had a hydro bill a year and a half ago of, say, \$100 a month are now opening the envelope and finding that it's \$200 a month; in other words, another \$1,200 a year. Many people do not have that additional \$1,200 a year. That's a bit of the context. People are shocked. They don't have the money to pay. They're very worried; they're very concerned.

As is the habit of the McGuinty government, members of the government stand up and try to make this tax credit sound as if it's the greatest thing since sliced bread. What we're dealing with here, frankly, is a measly \$70-million credit when you read the fine print. That's it. This is not going to come anywhere near to addressing the explosion that people have experienced in terms of their hydro bills. It's not going to come anywhere near it.

In addition, I think people have started to pay attention to this issue, and one of the things they recognize is that the explosion in the hydro bill has just begun; that decisions made by this government four and five years ago, three years ago, two years ago and in the last year are going to drive the hydro bill up even more; that the explosion they've seen in their hydro bill is nothing compared to what is about to happen over the next 12 to 18 months.

That is the context: a government trying to say they are doing something to help people when in fact this is not going to amount to very much at all and people are going to see even more serious increases in their hydro bills.

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I want people to understand specifically why they're going to see those increases in the hydro bill. One of the reasons, of course, is the HST adding another 8% on to the hydro bill. Making hydro electricity taxable with the HST is causing very serious pain for people. All you have to do is go to the Statistics Canada formula and it shows that you're talking about another \$240 a year for the average household just by adding the HST to the hydro bill. In fact, in northern Ontario, where I come from, it's going to be much more than that, and hopefully I'll have time to explain how that's going to happen. But the HST is one of the major sore spots here—\$240 a bill when you calculate it.

For the life of me, I don't understand why the government doesn't say, "Look, putting the HST on the hydro bill is not a good idea. We'll take it off." That's what New Democrats believe. Things that people need, essentials—electricity to ensure that the food in your refrigerator is safe to eat, electricity to ensure that your kids have a light to do their homework with, electricity so that you

can run your basic appliances in your home—should not be subject to this very regressive tax. However, no matter how many times we make that case, this is a government that insists on taxing an essential service with a very regressive tax.

There are some other decisions that have been made which have driven up the hydro bill and are going to drive up the hydro bill even more. The first one that comes to mind is the not-so-smart meter. After the government introduced the legislation to bring in the not-so-smart meter, as somebody who was on the committee and asked a lot of questions about this, I was struck by what I would call the superficial answers. It was as if someone had taken first-year economics and thought, because they had taken first-year economics, they knew everything there is to know about economics. It became very obvious, as the committee sat and we asked questions, that there was a big hole in the argument for not-so-smart meters. Essentially, what it is is this: People are not nocturnal animals. We're not like raccoons. We don't conduct major parts of our social and economic life after the sun goes down. We conduct most of our social and economic life during the day. That means that we send our kids to school during the day, we go to our doctors' appointments during the day, we come here to this facility during the day. We do all of these things during the day, which means, naturally, that there's a significant use of energy during the day.

I would argue that you're actually very limited in what you can drive into the midnight hours. I don't think it's going to be possible to say, "Well, we'll send our kids to school at 1 a.m. and save electricity—shift the peak electricity use to midnight by doing that." I don't think you're going to get physicians who are going to say, "Come and see me at 2 in the morning; we'll shift the electricity use to that time when it's less expensive."

Just for families—and I take my own family as an example—many of the things that use a lot of electricity we already do after 9 o'clock at night. A typical day works like this: The kids get home from school and you try to give something to eat. If you have a soccer game or a baseball game or a hockey game, you do that. After that, you do the homework. Then you try to get kids off to bed. And it's only after 9 o'clock at night in our house that you get around to doing the dishes or doing the laundry. Trying to portray that these not-so-smart meters are going to revolutionize when electricity gets used and when it doesn't get used just doesn't bear up when you do the analysis.

But this government is charging people on their hydro bills now. The cost is already over \$1.5 billion that people are paying on their hydro bill, and the cost is going to go up. In my part of the province, they have not implemented time-of-use metering yet. But let me tell you, in a part of the province where, in the wintertime, the sun goes down by 4 in the afternoon, when people see the shock of that of time-of-use bill because they had to turn their lights on at 4 o'clock in the evening and keep

them on at 5, at 6, at 7 and at 8—when people get that time-of-use bill, there's going to be serious shock.

You have to ask yourself, who would have implemented these not-so-smart meters so that, in major parts of the province, people who have to turn the lights on at 4 in the afternoon would get charged peak electricity prices? That's what's going to happen, and that's why the hydro bills are going to escalate. As the cost of putting in the not-so-smart meters continues, that \$1.5 billion is going to become \$2 billion, and people are going to pay for that on their hydro bill.

It doesn't end there. Earlier this year—and this is really quite atrocious, because at the same time that this government says, "We're going to give you \$70 million back on your hydro bill," what they're really doing is stacking another \$240 million in costs on. Let me tell you, that is really outrageous because it has been done, if not through the back door, then through the side door. What I'm talking about is the kangaroo-court process that was used at the Ontario Energy Board to slide through a \$240-million increase in people's hydro bills. You have such diverse groups as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters writing to the Minister of Energy and the Premier and saying, "This is outrageous"—\$240 million, again, added to the hydro bill. And what for? It's added to the hydro bill so that the big utilities that are already floating in money, thank you very much, can stuff another \$240 million in their pockets at the expense of hard-working consumers.

Government can try to cover this all they want, but when the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, an organization that represents low-income people in this province, writes and says to the government that the decision of the energy board is simply not supportable, the decision of the energy board is flawed and the end result means an eventual increase of an estimated \$285 million in rates—\$240 million on the hydro bill and another \$45 million on the natural gas and heating bill—when you've got organizations like that, or you've got the Consumers Council of Canada—"The Consumers Council of Canada is very concerned about the decision of the Ontario Energy Board ... to allow utilities to increase their return on equity to 10%" from 8%. From 8% to 10%, that is a very big increase when you stack it on the hydro bill. As I say, it amounts to \$240 million.

"The Consumers Council of Canada urges you to review the recent decision of the" Ontario Energy Board "in the light of the fundamentally flawed process through which this decision was made."

Then the Canadian Manufacturers' Association says, "Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters writes to support the calls for a review of the Ontario Energy Board's December 2009 report on the cost of capital for Ontario's regulated utilities...."

"Any equity return being achieved by Ontario manufacturers in the current environment of ever-increasing energy and utility costs is rapidly eroding. In these circumstances, it is of considerable concern to the" Can-

adian Manufacturers and Exporters “that the equity returns allowed to Ontario utilities should be materially increasing.”

These organizations representing consumers, representing low-income families and representing businesses are saying, “Don’t tell us that you’re going to give a \$70-million rebate on the hydro bill. Tell us about the \$240 million you’re adding to the hydro bill through this back-door kangaroo-court process.”

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But it doesn’t end there, because the fact of the matter is that both at the Bruce nuclear plant and the Darlington nuclear plant, the cost overruns associated with the refurbishment of those nuclear plants are going to add several billion dollars to the hydro bill. Now, yes, this government is going to use every manoeuvre it can to keep those increases off the hydro bill until after the election, but the fact of the matter is, the explosion that people have seen in their hydro bills already over the last year to 18 months is nothing compared to the explosion in the hydro bills that they’re going to see over the next year to 18 months, and this \$70-million credit is not going to come anywhere near addressing that—nowhere near addressing that.

I just want to give some examples of what I’m talking about here. In terms of the Darlington rebuild, Ontario Power Generation is planning to spend \$1.1 billion on the definition phase and the so-called campus master plan between 2011 and 2014. According to OPG’s preliminary economic analysis, the Darlington rebuild will have a capital cost of between \$8.5 billion to \$14 billion. That’s going to be added to the hydro bill.

Now, many people could take issue with their figures. Many people have and many people have suggested that the figures are going to be even larger than that, but I’m not going to do that here. I think it suffices to say that what this government has planned in terms of adding even more charges—considerable charges—to the hydro bill completely overwhelms the \$70-million tax credit.

Just some sobering thoughts: On average, the actual costs of Ontario nuclear projects have been historically two and a half times greater than their original cost estimates. So put that in the context of what I just mentioned. The government says \$8.5 billion to \$14 billion. Let’s take the lower figure, \$8.5 billion: \$17 billion added to the hydro bill. I won’t even mention the cost overruns at Bruce nuclear, but those cost overruns—Bruce nuclear is a private company, but because of the kind of sweetheart deal this government has signed with them, Bruce nuclear is going to add several billion dollars to the hydro bill.

Members of the government have said, “Well, this is unavoidable.” You don’t have to put the HST on the hydro bill. You don’t have to take an essential service like electricity and subject it to a very regressive tax, which is what the HST is.

We didn’t have to go down this road of the not-so-smart meters. We didn’t have to go down this road. We don’t have to continue going down this road because the not-so-smart meters have not been fully implemented.

There are several additional costs that are going to be added if this government continues to go down this road, and they are going to add significantly to the hydro bill.

Similarly, the government doesn’t have to have seven public bureaucracies running the hydro system, and I think this is what really infuriates people. At one time we had in the province Ontario Hydro. Ontario Hydro didn’t always do things right. They certainly made some mistakes. New Democrats have been very aggressive on the record over the last 30 years pointing some of that out, going right back to the 1970s. But Ontario Hydro did do some things right. Ontario Hydro is much like what we have today in Quebec. Hydro-Québec is a publicly owned utility that operates on a not-for-profit basis trying to provide affordable, responsible electricity to people in Quebec, much as we see Manitoba Hydro—publicly owned, operating on a not-for-profit basis trying to provide electricity to people on an affordable, responsible basis.

What do we have in Ontario now? Well, under the McGuinty Liberals we have Hydro One, which is one corporate entity, complete with the executives and their million-dollar salaries. We have Ontario Power Generation, another entity complete with its million-dollar salaries. We have the Ontario Energy Board, another bureaucracy, a huge bureaucracy. We have the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., another bureaucracy complete with its CEOs who make huge salaries. We have the Ontario electricity standards authority, another bureaucracy—this is number 5 now—complete with their huge bureaucracy and the executive salaries. Then there’s the Independent Electricity System Operator, again with their huge salaries and their huge bureaucracy. Then finally we have the Ontario Power Authority, which is out there signing contracts for billions of dollars that will bind Ontario consumers for 20 and 25 years. We now have seven electricity bureaucracies in Ontario, and people are paying for that on their hydro bill.

The government wants to pat itself on the back and say, “Oh, aren’t we doing a wonderful job here? We’re going to offer up \$70 million in electricity credits.” That is embarrassing in the context of the indefensible decisions that have been made, of some of the sweetheart contracts that have been handed out to profit-driven private electricity providers. It’s embarrassing in the context of executive salaries that have exploded through these seven bureaucracies. It is embarrassing in terms of the fiasco with the not-so-smart meters. And it’s embarrassing in the context of this government putting a very regressive tax, the HST, on the hydro bill, on a service which is essential for low-, modest- and moderate-income Ontarians in terms of trying to conduct their everyday lives, in terms of trying to get their kids to school, get the homework done and all those things.

I say to this government: You can spend a lot of time trying to pat yourself on the back for this \$70-million tax credit; I don’t think it’s going to do anything to stem the anger and the frustration that people feel and are going to continue to feel with the explosion of their hydro bill, all

of which is evidence of the wrong-headed decisions that have been made over and over again by this government on the electricity file.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The member shared with us some examples. I, too, would like to share an example of what this credit would mean to a single senior. A single senior with \$25,000 in net income who pays \$755 a month for her apartment: In 2009, she would have received \$704 in property tax assistance from Ontario's tax credits. Under the Ontario property tax credit that was proposed, she would have received \$7 more. Under the new enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit, she would receive \$811—or \$100 more—because of the new enhancements, for a total of \$107 in additional relief.

It may not sound like a lot, but that, with the other parts of the comprehensive tax package—so the proposed energy and property tax credit for seniors would see a senior receive up to \$1,025. A senior couple will receive, in transition payments, about \$1,000 every year; personal income tax cuts, \$200 per year; sales tax credit, \$260 a year; seniors in the north, \$200 for a family; seniors' property tax credit—the homeowners' tax credit—it went from \$250 to \$500.

What we see here is just one part of a whole package, and the package is about making sure that we help seniors in any way that we can. In fact, this property tax credit, if passed, will help over 740,000 Ontario seniors. They will see a tax relief. It's about helping our seniors, and we're committed to helping our seniors as much as we can.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The people of Ontario should understand that they're not going to get a cheque in the mail. These are tax credits that are going to come off your income tax, so this is money that you've paid out. You're not going to get it back, you're not going to get money in your hand. That's something that I think people in Ontario will understand, and I think it's indicative of this government: It's not something they tell people. It's the way they do business.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound wants you to resign and call an election. He's got a petition to that effect. I understand that people are driving 20 miles to come in to his office to sign this petition. People feel very strongly about it. I think a lot of MPPs, particularly Conservative MPPs, are going to have those petitions in their offices, and it will be interesting to see how many people come in to sign those and from what distance they come in.

The member from Rainy River—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes, way out west there, up north—spoke well about the effect of the electricity program up there or the plans of this government have had. As the member from Mississippi Mills just spoke to

earlier, it's all about doing the practical thing. Using the electrical grid in Ontario for some experimental purposes regarding solar energy or wind energy, paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour or paying 47 cents or 36 cents a kilowatt hour for wind or solar and putting all of that experimentation on the backs of businesses and residents in Ontario is just something that is so far out that the people of Ontario are going to reject this. They're upset about it, and they're going to be very, very upset about it come next October.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to comment on Bill 109 with respect to the Ontario energy and property tax credit.

First of all, a couple of things that I think are important to get on the record that the member conveniently left out: The credit will deliver almost \$1.3 billion in annual support. It's an increase of \$525 million in support for over 740,000 seniors in Ontario. This is important tax relief for energy pressures that seniors are facing in the province of Ontario. This is in addition to a number of other credits. First of all, the Ontario property tax credit was increased this year from \$250 to \$500. As well, the northern Ontario energy credit was introduced, which would see individuals receive \$130 and couples receive \$200.

I think these are tremendously important credits. I'm surprised that the member is speaking in opposition to these, but the member has very little credibility on energy issues. Under the member's government, hydro rates went up 40%, all the conservation initiatives were cancelled that would have saved us 5,200 megawatts in energy generation and they paid \$150 million to cancel the deal with Manitoba.

When the Conservatives brought in the price cap on electricity, they voted against it. When we lifted it, they voted against that too. I'm not sure what the member's plan is for energy conservation in the province of Ontario, but they certainly don't have much credibility. They oppose the nuclear, say they're opposed to coal and don't fully support the green energy initiatives. These initiatives are very important. We've added 8,000 new megawatts of energy in Ontario. We are shutting down coal-fired generation, protecting the health of Ontarians. These credits are an important way to offset energy costs in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's a pleasure to actually join in the debate yet again this afternoon, to respond to the member from Kenora–Rainy River—I wanted to get his riding on the record there—and to be part of this discussion about the proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit once again. I iterated earlier this afternoon and now have the opportunity to reiterate the importance of these targeted tax relief measures.

It's incredibly important when we're talking about 2.8 million people in the province of Ontario who will bene-

fit from these tax credits. Looking specifically at seniors, which this proposed Bill 109 does, in fact, we're talking about 245,000 seniors in the province of Ontario who will continue to see a tax credit. As we heard just a few minutes ago, 690,000 will receive an increase in their tax credit and 50,000 seniors will see a brand new tax credit that they haven't seen in the past. These are exactly the times that we need to do this in the province of Ontario.

I want to show support again from CARP, from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. John Thompson says, "In my opinion, the Ontario energy and property tax credit increase for seniors is a very positive, progressive and compassionate strategy to assist Ontario seniors, many who are on fixed incomes." John Thompson goes on to say, "A tax break for the necessities of life—shelter and energy—will provide additional personal resources for seniors to enhance the quality of life in other discretionary aspects."

This credit increase for seniors is a wise decision to assist those who have contributed so much to the prosperity of our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I rest my case. As I listened to government members' responses, what they all dutifully stayed away from is the fact that while \$70 million may be handed out with the left hand, the right hand is taking \$240 million out with the flawed decision by the Ontario Energy Board. The right hand is going to take at

least at least another \$500 million out with the not-so-smart meters. The HST is going to take another \$500 million out.

I think any reasonable person in the province—they wouldn't even need a calculator—could figure out that the McGuinty Liberals putting \$70 million back through this tax credit but taking \$240 million out through the flawed decision at the Ontario Energy Board, another \$500 million out through the not-so-smart meters, and another \$500 million out through the HST is going to leave people in a much worse-off position. That's the point that New Democrats are here to make. Yes, there's going to be a tax credit, but it's going to be a very minor tax credit, and when you put it next to the huge increases that are coming on the hydro bill and are being implemented now on the hydro bill, the \$70 million is not going to go very far.

If this government really wanted to do something, it would take the HST off the hydro bill. If it then wanted to do something more, it would stop the flawed not-so-smart-meter scheme in its tracks. And if it wanted to do something more, it would get rid of huge executive salaries that we now see at the seven hydro bureaucracies.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. It being four minutes to the hour, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
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Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
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Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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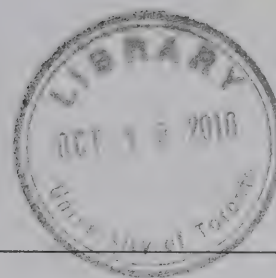
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Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 5 October 2010

Mardi 5 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 5 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 5 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 30, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to stand and represent the people of my riding and the people of Ontario. It's interesting that we're talking about controlled substances. I know that I'm not alone in this because as the caffeine starts coursing through my system and wakes me up, I recognize that we are all addicted to something. Quite frankly, the most common addiction of all is caffeine. Western society would cease as we know it were we not to drink our coffee or tea. Really, what we're talking about is addiction to controlled substances, to those substances that we have deemed illegal.

I want to give a shout-out before I begin to some phenomenal people in my own riding from the Parkdale drug strategy. We started this about four years ago in my riding, soon after I was elected for the first time. We brought together all of the care providers across Parkdale who deal with anybody with mental health and addiction issues. This included wonderful people from St. Joseph's, St. Christopher House, Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre and others. We wanted to institute and put into place in our own riding the phenomenal work that Toronto has done.

I want to herald what Toronto has done on the Toronto drug strategy force. They've looked at prevention, education, harm reduction and then enforcement. We've sought

to actually put into place those four pillars in Parkdale. We've done such things as a five-cent-a-drink campaign, which I know Senator Kirby tried to bring in across Canada. The five-cent-a-drink campaign is a wonderful idea that we put into place—we do it once a year in Parkdale—where five cents of every drink from contributing bars that want to take part goes toward drug rehab and other programs run by those who are members of the Parkdale drug strategy. We've done educational events and, hopefully also, preventative events. We are trying to put into place those four pillars.

I want to commend all the members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions because one of the hopes that we had in the Parkdale drug strategy, and I know that Toronto had as well with their drug strategy, is that the province step up, because it was quite obvious to us that the province was absent on this issue. This report is a wonderful document. I certainly suggest that people at home take time to read it. Its recommendations, all 23 of them, are all absolutely apropos. It worked as a committee of this House should work; that is, together; not at odds but together to move forward on this most intractable issue.

Now, the sad reality is that in seeing this bill, which is, quite frankly, a good bill—we're going to support it—it's such a tiny step. Why, oh why couldn't this government act on all 23 of these recommendations? A wonderful group that I've also had the pleasure of working with—Tragically OHIP, they were called—a group of parents whose children suffered from mental health and addiction issues and couldn't get help anywhere in the province, most of whom had mortgaged their homes to be able to send their children to provinces where they did have rehabilitation services or to the United States at incredible expense because there was literally nothing here for them—those parents would love to see these recommendations put into place.

There are some very famous drug addicts. I think of a personal hero, in terms of writing: William Burroughs. I think of Sigmund Freud; William Halsted, the father of modern surgery, who apparently performed most of his surgeries while high on morphine. Keith Richards. We could go on and on. Lindsay Lohan. People with money can find services; that's my point here. What we're talking about is the great and vast majority of people with mental health and addiction issues who, in this province, where we're supposed to enjoy medicare, can't find services.

I know for the folk in Parkdale and in High Park—because addiction doesn't know the difference—for my

folk who would like to get into rehabilitation, there's usually at least a six-to-eight-month wait. Now, a six-to-eight-month wait means for many, quite literally, death. A six-to-eight-month wait to be able to tackle their problem isn't good enough, and when they get into rehabilitation, if they're the lucky ones, usually it's a few weeks that they're looking at. We know from studies that it takes a few months, at least, of residential treatment before you are ready to go out into the world, back to your community, and even then you need follow-up.

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By the way, another shout-out to those incredible people who provide the self-help that is the 12-step movement. Certainly, the 12-step movement across North America and around the world has been responsible for saving as many lives, or more, as the invention of penicillin. This was a reaction to the absence of treatment and to the stigma of addiction that's in our communities. Those who are involved in 12-step groups know that, first of all, many, many people need residential treatment. That's simply not there for the vast majority of people who need it.

I think of a very touching story. The last time I was in the emergency ward, for a minor injury, I overheard a young doctor—because you're separated only by a curtain—in one of the next cubicles. I listened to the entire transaction between him and his patient, who are both, of course, anonymous. She was saying that she was in a methadone program but she just couldn't last until the next treatment; that she was in pain. This young doctor prescribed her Percocet—oxys, the poor man's heroin.

My concern about this bill, if I have one—because all it really does is tell us where the prescription is happening, who's getting the prescription, and what doctors are writing more and what pharmacists are filling more—is that it doesn't take into account what you do with that information. This young doctor wrote her a prescription for Percocet to last her until her next methadone treatment. This was a woman in pain—not the pain of a physical injury, but the pain of addiction, which is also painful. I wonder, when these doctors who deal with patients in pain or patients with addictions are flagged, what are we going to do with this information? I'm a little wary about that.

There's a good reason that enforcement is the fourth pillar of a drug program and a drug strategy, not the first. First is prevention, then education, then harm reduction, and then enforcement. When everything else fails, that's when you get to enforcement. If we rush to enforcement first, all we do is drive the addict somewhere else. As William Burroughs said, "If you are an addict, you will find your drug, if you have to travel a whole world to find it."

The problem is addiction at its core. We have to start with treatment of the addict, not with enforcement on the prescribers and the dispensers, or even police action. That's when everything else fails. Unfortunately, right now most of our money goes to the enforcement end, not

to the prevention end, not to the education end and certainly not to the treatment end.

To conclude, I'd simply say that this is a wonderful document with fabulous recommendations; would that the government would bring them all in. This is a small step. I'm a little bit wary about how it might be used. Is it going to be used to really come down upon our doctors and our pharmacists, or is it going to be used to simply point out the magnitude of the problem so that we can immediately rush to put into place the rehabilitation and the treatment centres we so desperately need in this province? That is the only real answer to the problem of addiction—not simply to know and not simply to enforce.

I thank you for the opportunity. Again, I want to say congratulations to all of those who've been active on the Parkdale drug strategy committee that's still ongoing—and to the wonderful work at city hall in Toronto on the drug issue. My prayers go out to all of those who struggle with addiction and to all of those who struggle with the very few means we give them out there—the doctors, the nurses, the pharmacists, the social workers—to deal with a very large problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Parkdale–High Park for the last 10 minutes. I listened to her talk about the strategy in Parkdale. Congratulations on that strategy. I wish that you could provide us with the details. Maybe we can learn more about it.

She spoke about many different things. She spoke about our strategy to control narcotic substances in the province of Ontario. She was focusing on the addiction issue and talking about all the different things that we have and places to treat people. I agree with you. It's an important issue. That's why we have our colleague, the member from Oakville, Kevin Flynn, to chair the mental health addictions strategy across Ontario. You mentioned that he came up with a detailed report.

The whole issue here is that we're talking about how we can control prescriptions, how we can control those substances, not how to treat them in the end. It is a very important step to first go to the doctors and the pharmacies and see how we can control those prescriptions by working together, by respecting them and giving them the chance to work with the Minister of Health in order to control those substances, not allowing them to be prescribed left and right. I hope she agrees with us. I know she doesn't think the bill went far enough, but it's an important and fundamental step toward correcting the direction of our Ministry of Health in order to support and help many different people across the province.

I hope the member continues her support to implement all the suggested strategies—I think she was a member of the committee—by our colleague, the chair of the committee, the member from Oakville.

Again, I'm looking forward to speaking more on this important issue because in the past I had the privilege and honour to introduce a private member's bill about this very important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to make just a few comments on the remarks made by the member from Parkdale–High Park, with which I agree.

Essentially, we are very pleased that the government has chosen to bring this bill forward now. It is important that we move forward and create the database so that we can stop some of the prescription drug abuse that's rampant in many communities across Ontario. She did comment on the work that was done by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I was very privileged to have been a member of that committee. Recommendation number 11 does indicate that we are calling on the government and the Minister of Health to immediately address the issue of prescription drug abuse.

We are happy that this has been brought forward but, of course, there are many other steps that need to be taken. There are 22 other recommendations contained in this report that address the problem of not having the same types of resources across the province for people who are suffering from mental health and addiction problems and also the serious lack of addiction facilities that we have in Ontario, which is to the point of many families, particularly with young people experiencing these problems, having to go to other jurisdictions in order to get treatment, principally in the United States.

She did also mention some of the initiatives like the Nickel-a-Drink campaign. There are others. We do have ways of addressing gambling problems with the monies that we have that are going into casinos and so on, but we don't have any directed funds to help with respect to mental health and addiction problems.

I think it is incumbent on this government to put not just this one recommendation in place; we need to have all 23 of the recommendations implemented. Certainly, for our part on this side of the House, the Progressive Conservative Party as official opposition, we will be continuing to press the Minister of Health and the McGuinty government to implement all 23 recommendations contained in this report.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Parkdale–High Park for emphasizing many of the things that our critic from Nickel Belt mentioned in her speech, and that is that we've got to do much more than just one of the five key strategies that have been recommended by the committee. The only one the government is moving on, member from London–Fanshawe, is the creation of an electronic database that will collect, monitor and analyze information. While all of that is useful, important and agreeable—in the sense that we all agree on this as well—we need to do a little more. We can't just simply criminalize addiction; we've got to be able to deal with addiction. But we have very few treatment facilities in the province, and unless you deal with that, you're simply going to always deal with that individual as a criminal. We're going to put him

away or put him in institutions without ever dealing with the problem itself. That's what we have to do.

I'm going to be speaking in a few moments just to elaborate on some of the very points that my colleague has made, but we need to do what she and the member from Nickel Belt have said, and that is employ all of the five pillars that have been recommended by the committee. If we don't actively engage ourselves in all of the pillars that deal with the narcotics that we are all taking into our system in one form or another, we're going to make the situation worse. While this is a useful little step, we've got to do much more. I thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for her comments.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to join in this conversation this morning, and that seems to be exactly what it is: a conversation about how we deal with the abuse of prescription narcotic drugs. There are good ideas coming forward from all sides of the aisle.

I think it's quite true that we need to do more when it comes to those who are addicted. But then, of course, we should be looking at things that will prevent them from becoming so. That's what this bill is looking forward to.

I have people who come to my office, who come to me and want to know how they can manage their pain without taking drugs and find places and avenues of dealing with pain that might be lifelong without having to turn towards drugs, which is one alternative. But to this particular bill, I think that education could be an important component as well.

Those of us who maybe have had a prescription drug in the past for, let's say, a sore throat or cold or something of that nature, we get this little bottle and it has a little sticker on it that says, "Don't drive a car or drive heavy machinery." I've never driven heavy machinery while on those, nor am I likely to. However, perhaps the warning of these narcotic drugs could be made more clear to patients when they take them. I know, anecdotally, that doctors try to prescribe that and warn people about the drugs that they are taking, but perhaps it would be something that we can all embark on: an education process as to the risks and hazards of prolonged use of these particular drugs.

It is unfortunate that Ontario has the highest level of narcotics use among all of the other provinces on a per capita basis. So this particular legislation is very timely. I suspect it will go to committee, as do most, if not all, of our bills, and we will have a more fulsome discussion at that time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you all for your comments.

Wouldn't it have been nice, though—just to echo the words of the member from Whitby–Oshawa—if all 23 of the recommendations had been acted on? At the rate that we're going in this Legislature, with one coming forward

in one session, it'll be another 23 years before we actually have a workable mental health and drug addictions strategy in Ontario. That's very sad. It's a sad commentary on the amount of work that went into this document, which is a phenomenal document, a document that we've needed for a long, long time.

Also, to hearken back to the member from Whitby—Oshawa, she mentioned gambling, which I haven't had time to touch on. But isn't it ironic, at the very least, that here is a government acting in the smallest possible way on the largest possible document here, in some senses, and yet rushing headlong into something that's phenomenally addictive: online gambling.

So, on one side, they're making one tiny little baby step towards amassing data on addiction for controlled substances, and on the other side, they're taking a giant leap into the unknown with online gambling purely, let's face it, for money. It's about money—making money. We know that's wildly addictive.

Just to summarize, I want to say thank you to the committee for coming up with this wonderful work. Also, thank you to the city of Toronto for their four-pronged drug strategy, which we've been working with in Parkdale for four years now, and actually trying to implement on the ground. To the Parkdale drug strategy: hello and thank you for your efforts. And here's hoping that it doesn't take 23 years to see all of the recommendations of this excellent piece of work put into place. People are dying waiting.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and privileged to stand up in my place and speak about this very important issue, which all of us in this House are concerned about, and we're trying to find a solution to it.

As I mentioned at the beginning when I spoke for two minutes, a long time ago, almost four years ago, I introduced a bill in this House to control the excessive use of OxyContin, which is being prescribed loosely by some doctors, which causes a lot of trouble, a lot of problems, in many different parts of Ontario. Many members spoke about those prescriptions eventually creating an addiction for some people and killing people.

This issue was important to me. A lady came to my office because she lost her husband and lost her son. She came to my office almost five years ago. She was talking about her husband, who was sick with some kind of disease. He was being ordered to take OxyContin on a regular basis to control his pain. In the end, he killed himself. The same issue, the same disease, happened with her son. He was taking OxyContin for many years and became addicted to it. He was in a lot of pain. He threw himself off the Galleria Mall in London and killed himself.

This issue is important. It's important for all of us to see how we can control narcotic substances. I believe the minister acted on the recommendations of the committee on mental health and addictions, which I think was comprised of members from all three parties, a non-

partisan committee, to study addictions and mental health issues across the province.

You see a lot of people on the streets across Ontario suffering from mental health issues, which nobody can ignore. It's our obligation and duty to put forward a positive solution to deal with this issue.

I had the chance to meet with many different experts in this field in London, and we have been working on it, and I know many parties and many governments before worked hard to find a solution to this very, very severe issue which all of us suffer from in this province. When you talk to the police and to the hospital officials and doctors, they tell you how important this issue is.

So now we are talking about addictions. I have a friend who is a pharmacist. In London, Ontario, he has one methadone clinic to deal with prescriptions from certain doctors to help people withdraw from addictions to narcotic drugs. He came to my office and said, "I know a lot about this issue. I know a lot of doctors who prescribe narcotics left and right without thinking, just to get people out of their office or give them some kind of medication to quiet their pain for a certain time."

But what happens, as everybody knows, as all the experts in this place know and all the experts in Ontario know, and the whole world, is when you're given certain medications, you become addicted, and addictions create a lot of problems, sometimes mental issues, because it becomes excessive and people take it left and right when they feel a little pain. That's why the Minister of Health is coming up with a strategy, first to create a partnership with health care providers.

I was listening to my colleague from Oak Ridges—Markham speaking last week about this very issue. As you know, she's a doctor. She was the medical officer of York region, and she knows about a lot of this stuff.

The most important thing is not to enforce it by force but to create that level of understanding among the health providers, the doctors and nurses who have the ability to prescribe those medications, to see how we can control it. Instead of giving it left and right, we'll know exactly what we're doing, and we'll try as much as possible to deal with it in different ways.

Also, the dispensing fee and dispensing those drugs is important. By creating a database, we'll have control; we'll see which doctor is dispensing a lot or less and why. The excessive dispensing and the excessive prescribing of those medications is not good. As I mentioned at the beginning, it costs us a lot of money and it costs us a lot of lives—a lot of wonderful people who go for treatment and come out addicted to certain drugs.

I think if we find an alternative way to deal with these issues instead of giving medication left and right, especially narcotic substances like OxyContin and Percocet—today, early in the morning when I was watching the news, I listened to very important news coming from a Canadian medical journal, talking about codeine: Codeine is not good for your health; codeine might create addictions; codeine is not good. Every one of us in this House and in the province of Ontario has taken codeine

for certain pain. With the medical journal coming out with this warning today, I think it is our obligation and our duty, as a government, as elected officials, as the Minister of Health, to create a strategy to control those narcotic substances for the sake of the people of Ontario, for the sake of our health in this province, and also to create a safe haven for all of us in this province.

Thank you for allowing me to stand up and speak.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments on this bill.

I applaud the work of the select committee that worked on the addictions and mental health. I have that excellent report on my desk here. All sides tend to agree on this. One of the recommendations by the select committee which was unanimously adopted is about the addictive painkilling medication. Mostly, you hear about OxyContin.

The pharmacists today have a system when they record prescription drugs, and I think they're going to formalize that process.

Initially, when the government started the eHealth application, one of the goals was to integrate the nine different modules—long-term care, the pharmacists, the hospitals, the CCACs etc.—to link them all together to monitor, to avoid duplication and to create some efficiencies. I know they recognize that they squandered a billion dollars on eHealth when George Smitherman was the minister—I think that's probably cleaned up now—but that money could easily have put that system in place.

So let's not forget to keep our eye on the ball. Watch the Premier; watch the Minister of Health, so that we get this right and don't waste any more money—because this ultimately will save lives. We see that suicide rates are related to these addictive medications. We need to get this right.

We're onside with this. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear that we want to move forward quickly with this but we don't want to waste any more money.

The member from London–Fanshawe knows full well, because I believe his wife is a physician, and as such she would know and be able to advise him on these subjects, if it's the right thing to do—which we support.

I'm anxious to hear our next speaker, Mr. Miller, who will be speaking on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to my colleague the member from London–Fanshawe, who described very well the depth of the problem, how widespread the problem is, and why it's necessary to do this.

I want to comment on this issue of the narcotics strategy. There are five elements to the narcotics strategy, one of which is the tracking, which is what we are addressing in the legislation. The reason this bill only addresses the tracking is because that's the only component of the strategy for which legislation is required.

The Ministry of Health currently collects information about prescriptions and dispensing related to the Ontario drug benefit, but it only has the legal authority to use that information for billing. This bill gives them the authority to use that same information for the purpose of tracking inappropriate use of prescription narcotics. In addition, it gives the Ministry of Health the authority to collect the same information for patients who are not on the Ontario drug benefit; that is, for whom the government is not paying the bill.

So the purpose of the bill is to give the government the legal authority to do what it has to do. It has nothing to do with the authority to write software. The rest of the strategy, which includes working with pharmacists, working with doctors, working with patients, expanding the capacity to treat addictions—none of those things require legislation. That's why they're not in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I always enjoy the remarks from my good friend the member from London–Fanshawe because he certainly brings a wealth of experience to this issue. It has been noted that his wife is a physician working in London, Ontario.

Seeing the negative impact of the misuse of narcotic drugs such as OxyContin and Percocet, and having the opportunity to be a member of the select committee on mental health services in the province of Ontario indeed was an eye-opener for me personally, along with my colleagues who had the opportunity to serve on that committee and hear representations from people from every part of the province, from Cochrane to Kenora, to Cornwall, to Peterborough, to Petrolia.

These people came forward to share very personal stories, and I must commend those individuals who came forward to share those personal stories because it indeed is a very difficult thing to do, particularly when a family member—a son or daughter or other loved one—committed suicide because of the misuse and overuse of narcotics, Percocet and OxyContin.

I think this bill is a real opportunity to build on the good work of the select committee.

By and large, I think we should have the opportunity to have more select committees in this Legislature as an opportunity for members to come together in unison to look in depth at a particular problem in the province of Ontario and come up with a number of recommendations. I think the last select committee was one on alternative fuels, many years ago. It indeed also had very good recommendations for the policy-makers to look at.

I think the select committee is a very important mechanism that we need to use more often in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

The member from London–Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the members from Durham, Guelph and Peterborough for their comments.

I know it's important for all of us, from both sides of the House, to be talking about the importance of this strategy to control narcotic substances from being prescribed loosely in the province of Ontario, through doctors or pharmacies.

I also want to tell the member from Durham: Yes, my wife is a medical doctor. When I get a headache, I always try to take Advil. She goes crazy and nuts. She tells me, "No, no, don't take it. Try as much as possible to deal with it without Advil or Tylenol. Just go relax and don't"—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Go relax? Does it work?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Well, it works. When I go sleep a little bit and come back again, it's a lot better than taking drugs. It's very important. You try as much as possible to avoid taking those drugs, because drugs are not good in general.

As I mentioned earlier, and my colleague from Guelph and the member from Peterborough mentioned, those narcotic drugs that are being prescribed and taken for a certain time might cause suicide. Many people kill themselves as a result of that, when they get addicted and they cannot find those narcotic drugs.

I had mentioned my friend the pharmacist who's always telling me that some people are taking those narcotic drugs, not because they want them but to sell them in the street. So it's overprescribing and dispensing of those narcotic substances. They're not good all the time, and they're not being used in the right direction most of the time.

That's why the minister is coming out with a strategy to create the database to monitor those dispensing. I think it's a very important step toward controlling our drug habits in the province of Ontario and the dispensing of those drugs.

The only way we can control it and be successful is when we work in partnership with the pharmacists, with the doctors, because those are the people on the front line who are dealing with patients in order to have success for this strategy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes to Bill 101. I know it's winding down and will likely wrap up this morning. I just wanted to comment briefly about Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances.

"The act seeks to improve the health and safety of Ontarians by permitting the monitoring, analyzing and reporting of information, including personal information, related to the prescribing and dispensing of monitored drugs in order to:

"(1) Contribute to and promote appropriate prescribing and dispensing practices for monitored drugs in order to support access to monitored drugs for medically appropriate treatment, including treatment for pain;

"(b) identify and reduce the abuse, misuse and diversion of monitored drugs; and

"(c) reduce the risk of addiction and death resulting from the abuse or misuse of monitored drugs."

0940

It's obvious that all three parties support this. As we know, this bill has come in part from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, on which, from our side of the House, the member from Whitby—Oshawa and the member from Dufferin—Caledon played an important role. In fact, that committee got started, I believe, from a resolution put forward by the member from Whitby—Oshawa, and from that resolution, the House decided to form the select committee. I think they should be commended for the good work they have done. I agree with the past speaker that the Legislature should make more use of select committees. I know I was involved with the Select Committee on Alternative Fuel Sources, and a number of the recommendations from that committee have been adopted.

This bill has really come from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, on which members of all sides of the House participated. Recommendation 11 from that report is, "The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should immediately address the problem of addiction to prescription painkillers."

We've certainly seen a huge rise in the problem of people being addicted to painkillers like OxyContin. In fact, there's a report prepared by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*, and it says, "There has been a steep and unprecedented increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment for oxycodone addiction since controlled-release (long-acting) oxycodone products became available in 1995. The number of admissions at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Medical Withdrawal Management Service seeking treatment for opioid detoxification related to controlled-release oxycodone went from 3.8% of opioid admissions in 2000 to 55.4% in 2004." That's just a huge increase.

The report also noted that "CAMH found that among Ontario high school students, one fifth reported using opioids or at least one prescription drug without a doctor's prescription in 2009, compared to only 12% of students surveyed who reported smoking cigarettes."

The report contains statistics concerning fatalities. "Deaths due to oxycodone rose from 35 in 2002 to 119 in 2006," an increase of 240%. So we're seeing a huge increase in the province. In communities across Ontario, the trafficking of prescription narcotics by both individuals and organized crime groups has resulted in a doubling of prescription drug arrests in Toronto between 2005 and 2008 and a significant increase in pharmacy robberies and thefts of prescription narcotics. The problem with the abuse of prescription narcotics is particularly acute in many First Nations communities, especially in more remote locations where an OxyContin tablet that may sell on the streets of Toronto for \$45 costs several hundred dollars.

The cost of these drugs within our health care system is rapidly increasing. In 2009-10, the Ministry of Health

and Long-Term Care spent \$156 million on narcotics for Ontario drug benefit program recipients—for 3.9 million prescriptions. This equates to an average of six prescriptions per person, at an annual cost of \$260 per person.

It's obvious from the college of physicians' report that there is a big problem out there. I think it's good to see the factual information, but I think we all see it in our communities, and it affects all communities across Ontario, whether they're small rural communities I spent a lot of time at hockey rinks with three of our children who played hockey. I spent 15 years, just virtually every weekend, in hockey rinks, and you meet a lot of families over that time frame and get to know their kids. I know of at least one family whose daughter became addicted to OxyContin. It's just tragic the way that addiction rips apart a family and an otherwise very nice person; a very nice girl becomes somebody that she isn't because of this terrible addiction. It rips the fabric of a family apart. It rips the fabric of a community apart.

I'm happy to see that the government is taking an initial step, sort of step one of many, to at least know what's going on out there so that people can't shop around at different pharmacies to fill their drug addiction and so that there's some sort of knowledge among doctors that other doctors are prescribing this same drug. This is basic knowledge we need.

Obviously, it's important that the government implement this in a way that works and that is cost-effective, because they do have a bad track record. It's about electronic health records, and we know that they've spent an awful lot of money on eHealth without much to show for it. The \$1-billion figure is tossed around. Obviously, as the opposition, we'll be watching the way they implement this legislation.

As I say, it's step one of many. There are 23 recommendations from the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This is number 11, but one recommendation from the committee's report. So we look forward to the government following up with further steps to further control this problem that does rip the fabric and the heart out of communities and families across this province.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. I thank you for the opportunity to have a brief moment to make comments on Bill 101.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was listening intently—until my phone rang—to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I did realize that he was reporting on our leader Tim Hudak's advice to caucus on this bill, and I commend him for that because we see this as an appropriate reaction to a chronic situation, as the member has said, that has caused deaths and suicides.

Each of us as members, in our ridings and in our riding offices—Madam Speaker, you would be the same, I'm sure—hear from families on occasion who are affected by this, either directly or indirectly. They have

children or friends who could be overcome by these addictive substances. This is a serious, serious problem.

I can tell you that, in my own riding, there was some talk of a physician who himself became addicted to this situation. Out of complete compassion—I believe his motives were compassionate—he was helping people who had either work-related injuries or other accidents where these pain medications, like OxyContin, were prescribed.

Now, here's the issue: I think, in their code of ethics and behaviour, they need the monitoring as well, because on compassionate grounds, they are doing the best they can for their patients. I think that's laudable. But when you look at the statistics of the increases that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka spoke of, it's evident that there is some abuse in the system. As such, it warrants the actions recommended by the select committee. Indeed, I commend the Premier for taking a lead role, I might say, in moving this forward.

Our concern is, is it far enough and will it be properly implemented? That's a fair question. I would expect that there should be some hearings, especially with First Nations, and other users of the system. Let's make sure we get this right, not like the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you for the opportunity to add a few comments to the bill that is being debated today.

As my colleague from across the way, from Peterborough, said, and my other colleague from Guelph, I've had the opportunity also to serve on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I have to say that it was an eye-opening experience, travelling the province and hearing from deputation after deputation on the issue of OxyContin being overused throughout the province. I think all the speakers around have clearly stated that it is a problem, and the government is making this particular move to try to control that problem.

But let me tell you, I had a family member just recently who had been ill, and in going to the hospital emergency, they actually prescribed OxyContin and other painkillers in an open prescription with open repeats. So our medical community needs to be educated about this problem and we need to work with them very closely. I think this bill is going to do that job for us, along with the Ontario Medical Association. I'm hoping that we will definitely be able to curb the abuse of this particular narcotic.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Any further comments? The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Yes, Etobicoke North, and proudly.

It's a privilege and responsibility to speak not only as a parliamentarian but also as a physician. The issue of narcotic prescription, as well as overuse and dependence, is of course something that we as physicians have known

about for quite some time. It's an issue that comes up in medical school. It probably does not receive the adequate amount of training that we should actually receive in order to better serve the public, so I look forward to the unfolding of this particular legislation and all the various initiatives so that prescribers themselves will appropriately prescribe and deal with and manage patients who are in chronic pain situations. Of course, these are scenarios that come to us on a very, very regular basis: post-surgical, post-accident, cancer etc. But nevertheless, in order to avoid dependence and ultimately abusive situations, I think it's certainly in the public interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: It was a privilege to have the opportunity to speak. I thank the member from Durham for adding some comments, and the members from Scarborough–Rouge River and Etobicoke North as well.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River mentioned that he was a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I'd certainly like to commend him for the work that he did, along with the other committee members.

Certainly we recognize that prescription drug abuse in Ontario is an urgent problem and a growing problem; there's no question that it needs to be addressed. This legislation is just the first step in a multi-faceted problem.

We agree with the underlying principles of the bill. We will be asking for full committee hearings, including, as in the report I cited in my comments, committee hearings in northern Ontario and in aboriginal communities where I think the problem is much worse. I think we need to hear from all those communities that are affected by this problem because it does do great damage to families and great damage to communities. It's a problem that needs to be addressed, and we look forward to this first step being taken and then input at committee and further steps being taken in the future to address this very serious problem we have in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is a pleasure to speak to this bill because I wanted to emphasize a couple of things that my friend from Parkdale–High Park mentioned, including our critic from Nickel Belt. I want to say that I, too, like the member from Parkdale–High Park, am pleased with the report that was produced by the participation of all three political parties. It's significant, because we don't always do this, but when we do, it means that all three political parties are ready to do something about it. And if that is true, we can be bold; the government can be bold. If all three political parties agree and 21 recommendations came out of this report, that means that the government could have taken the time to do this right and implement all 21 recommendations. It still can, of course. But the government proceeded to implement but one recommendation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: So far.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's okay, member from Peterborough; of course that's okay. I worry that, because we are going to be in an election next year, not much is going to happen over the next year. And after this session, I can guarantee that not much will happen in the next session—guaranteed, member from Peterborough. Mark my words. That's why I worry. When the member from Peterborough says, "It's true; it's one strategy at this time," suggesting that there will be more, I'm worried that there may not be much more in this regard for the who-knows-when future.

Given that we had an opportunity to do a little more, the government takes the picayune step and pats itself on the back, which is fine, but we could do so much more. That's really the point, isn't it? I understand, when you've got political opposition—I do—and if you've got Tories and New Democrats opposing you, then moving, as you often do, at a snail's pace would be the appropriate response. But when you move at a snail's pace and you've got all three political parties on board, I don't get it. I just don't understand it. You move at a snail's pace even when you have support from the other two political parties. How do you explain that *modus Liberal operandi*? How do you explain it? I can't explain it. I just don't get it.

I know the member from Guelph says the same thing, that this is the one bill that deals with this issue. I understand. The other issues don't require a bill, she commented, or could, but it would be done at another time, I'm assuming. So the argument I make is that when we have an opportunity to do much more, we should seize it, as opposed to just letting things slip out of your hands, as is so typical of what you guys do on a regular basis. It's a bit saddening.

Here is the background: On August 27, 2010, the Minister of Health announced a narcotics strategy. Member from London–Fanshawe, here's the strategy. Numero uno: The creation of an electronic database that would collect, monitor and analyze information related to prescription narcotics and controlled substances. That's number one. There are four others, and you only implemented the one out of the five pillars that the minister said is part of a narcotics strategy. The other four recommendations that I'm going to read will have to wait for another day: work with health sector physicians and nurse practitioners to raise awareness about appropriate prescribing; work with health sector pharmacists to raise awareness about appropriate dispensing; engage in patient education to address excessive use and misuse of prescription narcotics; and focus on addiction treatment and services.

The problem is that because the issue is so big, we've got to do a little more. When I look at some of the stats, it's horrifying. CAMH—this institution is in my riding—has done a study of 12- to 17-year-olds and found that 20% of these young men and women—12- to 17-year-olds—use opiates. This is crazy and frightening. The study also shows that only 12% of students reported

smoking cigarettes in 2007. So 20% use opiates of one form or another and 12% smoke, which means young men and women are probably addicted to drugs more so than they are addicted to smoking. This is scary stuff.

So how are we dealing with this? Okay; the first strategy is to have an electronic database. It's an important tool; we understand. But when you read on, and you know that Ontario has the highest use of opiates in Canada and you say, "What are we doing about it?" and you know that we've got 150 service providers for addiction services, but in spite of those 150 service providers, Ontarians are not getting the assessment, the treatment and the services that they need to deal with this addiction, you know you've got a problem. There are 150 service providers for addiction services, and we're not getting the assessment, the treatment and the services they need to deal with this addiction.

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This legislation aims to reduce the supply of illicit narcotics, but we can't simply cut off the supply and think of nothing to help cure the addiction. This is where the main problem stems from. Unless we deal with why it happens, and unless we treat the problem—monitoring this issue is good, having the electronic database is fine, and, yeah, they recognize as Liberals that this is a good first step, but, my God, we've got to do something quick and fast, and this strategy is something that we have to engage in right away. So I say, why wait? And when is the rest of the strategy coming? When is the government going to implement the other 21 recommendations that the other two political parties agreed to? We've got to move fast.

I remember a friend of mine, Dr. Allodi, who did a study in the late 1960s and early 1970s that talked about the high number of women who were working at home—that was their job, as homemakers, at the time—and were addicted to Valium. That was the prescription that was prescribed on a regular basis for so many women who were on the outskirts of Toronto and/or beyond. They were alone at home and suffering with so many problems and suffering all alone, addicted to Valium prescribed by doctors on a regular basis. What did we do about that? And what are we doing about that today?

They introduce one part of the strategy, and all I can hope for is that we deal with the bigger strategy of addiction and the bigger strategy of chronic pain. We've got about two to three million people that suffer from chronic pain, and there is no chronic pain management strategy across the province. While there are some specialists in some parts of the province doing a good job of this, there is no chronic pain management in some parts of the province at all. In the north, in particular, we've got very little by way of service for this particular problem of chronic pain. There's no strategy for it.

The member from London—Fanshawe keeps saying that this is the first part and the member from Guelph keeps saying that this is the first part, and I understand that. We know that the problem is huge. What we know is that we've got to move on this quickly, and what I

know is that you've got three political parties interested in working with you to make this happen today. All I can hope is that this government will move on this quickly. Let's, yes, get into committee, debate this, see what other folks have to say, and then let's move on to dealing with the other recommendations that are made with the support of all three political parties and deal with the problems.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would just like to note that when you look at the select committee report and the recommendations in here, the only recommendation that said we need to do this immediately is to deal with prescription narcotics. That's what we are doing here: dealing with the required legislation immediately.

I would like to note that what I said was that the only part of the narcotics strategy which required legislation was the tracking. I didn't say that it was the only part we were doing. In fact, we are working with the regulatory colleges for doctors and dentists to do better education around prescribing practices. We are already working with the College of Pharmacists to look at dispensing practices. The tracking will enable us to figure out which patients actually need education about drug use. So the fact that this is the only piece that requires legislation doesn't mean that we aren't working on the other strands of the strategy. We are.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened intently to the member from Trinity-Spadina. He brings fire and enthusiasm to the issue, which is important to push the government into some sort of action as opposed to delay.

We saw yesterday—they passed the retirement homes regulation bill; yet, they've done nothing. We saw it in a report in the Toronto Star. This bill needs the urgency that the member from Trinity-Spadina brings.

The member from Guelph said—and I want to emphasize this. It says here that the College of Physicians and Surgeons issued a report called *Avoiding Abuse, Achieving a Balance*. These are their words: "There has been a steep and unprecedented increase in the number of individuals seeking treatment for oxycodone addiction since controlled-release (long-acting) oxycodone products became available in 1995." That's the call to action that the member from Trinity-Spadina is talking about—bringing some urgency. Let's get on with this.

If you need to have hearings to get this right, to make sure that we consult with the various stakeholders—including the college, including the First Nations people, and I would say the physician community as well as the pharmacist community. We need to get this right. We don't need to superimpose a new solution onto the technology solution of tracking, reporting and tracing the issuance of prescriptions and the issuing of the medication itself, and tracking the outcomes—whether or not it's an appropriate prescription—and working with the college to make sure that they're getting it right.

When you have people dying from a system that's out of control, I think the Premier has an eminent responsibility to act. The member from Guelph doesn't see this as an integrated solution, and that's wrong. Even the select committee report makes it clear. Almost every one of the 23 recommendations talks about the addictions portion of it, and this is an eminent one.

Let's get on with it. We're prepared to work with you. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear to our caucus. We're here to support it. Let's get on—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Trinity-Spadina speaking about this very important issue. He talked about addictions as a general issue in the province of Ontario. There's no doubt about it: Addictions are a problem.

We're talking about two different things as a result of addictions. First, addictions come from maybe opium drugs, hash and marijuana, which come from the street and which have nothing to do with the Ministry of Health. Maybe it will be talked about in the policing issue. And we talked about the drugs being prescribed by doctors and dentists and being dispensed by pharmacists. That's what we're talking about in this particular bill, which we can control. That's why we're trying to control—to make sure that, in conjunction with a full understanding between the Ministry of Health, the doctors and the pharmacists, we can create a database and monitor prescriptions, and also, by creating a full understanding with the pharmacists, control the dispensing of those narcotic drugs for the sake of the people of Ontario.

Addictions as a whole is an important issue that we should deal with, but, as I mentioned, there are two parts to it: one through the Ministry of Health and one through the policing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank the speakers in reaction to what I said. We've got to move on this quickly. We need a comprehensive strategy, and we need it today.

Now that we are allowing online gambling—something that Premier McGuinty said he wasn't going to do but changed his mind on, saying that that's okay now—it's going to make addiction even worse. This is the worst plague that could befall Ontarians. Online gambling means that more and more people are just going to gamble in the comfort of their little homes at their little computers. This is nuts. It truly is nuts. The government is afraid that they're going to lose money to other jurisdictions doing it. If other jurisdictions are doing it, they're equally nuts. Everybody's nuts on this issue.

It ought not to be about money. It ought to be about the fact that when people gamble, most of them lose. The majority lose and only a couple of people win. When those people lose, they're going to turn to drugs because that's all they've got to comfort their problems. They're

going to hurt themselves and they're going to hurt their families. I know Liberals are looking at me saying, "Yeah, we made the same arguments in our caucus meetings and we couldn't convince our Premier McGuinty to do otherwise." I know you're looking at me funny because we probably had the same debates in 1990-92. I'm telling you, it's the wrong thing to have done.

We need a comprehensive strategy aujourd'hui because the problem of addiction is going to get worse. Simply monitoring, through an electronic database, how we are prescribing is simply not enough. We've got to get ready for this.

All the good doctors who are in the Liberal caucus: You've got to push Premier McGuinty to move on this. All three parties are on the same team. Let's move on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Seeing none, Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 101. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be deferred until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to recognize three really good friends who are visiting Queen's Park. In our members' gallery, from Ottawa: Meg Hamilton, who's the executive director of the Council of Heritage Organizations in Ottawa; Mike Steinhauer, who's the director of the Bytown Museum, which is located in the great riding of Ottawa Centre; and Andrea Miller, who's the executive director of the Ottawa Museum Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to introduce here today Tom Reitz, the manager/curator of the Waterloo Region Museum, and also Bev Dietrich, the curator of the Guelph Civic Museum, McCrae House.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to introduce Michaela McGuire from my riding of Toronto Centre. She's just come down today because she's interested in seeing how the Legislature works. She's joining us here in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Audrey Steele and the member from Sault Ste. Marie, to welcome her brother, former page Alexander Steele, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Brigid Goulem and the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, we'd like to welcome her aunt Keri Johnston to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of page Shanthos Thangalingam and the member from York South–Weston, we'd like to welcome mother Mary, father Thangalingam and sister Sharanja to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning is Mr. Chung, former Prime Minister of South Korea. He's accompanied by Dr. Li and Reverend Kim. Our guests will be unveiling a memorial garden and statue at the Toronto Zoo in remembrance of Dr. Schofield's life and dedication to the people of Korea. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. One year from tomorrow, Ontario families will have a clear choice between my team of Ontario PCs, who will fight to ensure that tax dollars are focused on services that families need and care about, like front-line health care, or a tired Liberal government that presided over an eight-year feeding frenzy of Liberal-friendly consultants.

Tomorrow is also the one-year anniversary of the member for Don Valley East being dumped from cabinet and forced to carry George Smitherman's dirty laundry in the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle.

Premier, will you kindly update us: Since you dumped the minister to cover for Mr. Smitherman, how much more money have you wasted in eHealth Ontario experiments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will agree that Ontarians have a genuine interest in what is going to happen approximately a year from now, but I think they have a greater continuing interest in the quality of the public services today, and we're not going to take our eye off that ball. Among other things—and I would ask that my honourable colleague acknowledge these at some point in time—we have, in fact, made some progress. About a million more Ontarians now have a doctor. We're building 18 new hospitals. Not only are we measuring wait times, we're actually getting them down in the province of Ontario. We're putting in place 200 family health teams. We're putting in place I think 30 nurse-practitioner-led clinics. Those are all about delivering good-quality services right to the front line to help Ontario families to ensure they've got access to the best health care possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, as you know, a year ago you forced the member for Don Valley East to walk the plank to cover for George Smitherman and your own

waste of \$1 billion in the eHealth boondoggle. Now, a year later, page 76 of eHealth Ontario's recent report shows that not even a scathing auditor's report into your waste at eHealth Ontario stopped you from making Ontario families pay another \$343 million into eHealth last year alone.

It took them six years to waste the first billion dollars at eHealth. Now you're on pace to burn through the next billion dollars in three years alone.

Premier, after spending \$1.5 billion, can you at least say that eHealth is up and running? Can I access my electronic health record today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member opposite for the opportunity to talk about what's happening at eHealth. You're absolutely right: There were some problems there, and we have taken corrective action.

Before I talk about that, though, I want to talk about how important it is that we move forward and that we move forward aggressively with eHealth. It is not an overstatement to say that the future of our health care system depends on us getting results when it comes to eHealth. We do have new leadership at eHealth Ontario. We've got a new chair, Ray Hession, and we've got a new CEO, Greg Reed. We've reduced consultant use from 394 to just under 100. We've got tough new procurement rules; they're in line with government directives. We've got expense rules; expenses are now reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner and posted online. We are working very hard, and in the supplementary I'll talk about some of the achievements.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister answering for the Premier says that "there were some problems there." Minister, it was a billion-dollar boondoggle at a time when families were waiting to get a loved one care in an emergency room, when families were waiting to get a loved one into a long-term-care home for years. You say, "There were some problems there." It was a boondoggle. It was a scandal and a tragic waste of scarce health care dollars. Shame on you for saying, "There were some problems there."

What have we seen since? We've seen \$343 million more poured into the eHealth abyss and \$250 million into your bloated health bureaucracies—the LHINs—which don't spend a single minute with patients and don't do a single surgery or MRI.

Now the PC caucus has found out that not only is eHealth not up and running, they haven't even begun the procurement process for figuring out who is going to do that. What—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to talk about some of the progress that we've made.

We now have close to four million Ontarians who have physicians with electronic medical records, and

we're moving forward; we're looking to double that number.

Telemedicine is a huge part of eHealth Ontario. Telemedicine allows people in Moose Factory to have a consultation with a specialist in London. Telemedicine is a growing part. I trust that the members opposite understand the value of telemedicine. Over 100,000 remote medical consultations took place this past year. That's double what it was the year before—on telemedicine alone. We've got 345 new sites added to telemedicine and upgrades at 92. That means that far, far more Ontarians are able to get access to specialists without leaving their home communities. There's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, a year from tomorrow, Ontario families will have a clear choice between my team of Ontario PCs, who are focused on transparency and accountability in government, or Premier McGuinty adding to his seven-year legacy of only acting when his hand is caught in the cookie jar, handing out untendered contracts to Liberal-friendly consultants.

Premier, six months ago, we brought forward legislation that would expand FOI to hospitals and require that contracts and hospitality expenses be posted online. We would have put a stop to your consultant feeding frenzy.

My colleague the member for Whitby—Oshawa has a motion before the House today to end the practice of consultants billing hospitals, long-term-care homes, your LHINs etc., taking money out of front-line care. Premier, will you support the motion standing in the name of our health critic?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to the whole issue of transparency and accountability. I would ask, rhetorically somewhat, why it is that on every single occasion when we moved to introduce greater transparency and more rigorous accountability, the leader of the official opposition and his party stood in the way of that and voted against those very measures. I think he's got to ask himself that.

For example, when it comes to the sunshine list, we expanded that to include OPG and Hydro One, and they opposed that. Still, to this very day, I can't understand that. We expanded the Auditor General's role to value-for-money audits in the broader public sector: hospitals, universities and schools. They opposed that.

In each and every instance—and I'll take the time in supplementaries to go through more—they opposed our efforts to introduce more transparency and more accountability.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No doubt, after seven years, Dalton McGuinty has changed. The rot—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member about the use of names. Titles, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty has changed. The rot and culture of waste in the McGuinty government has set in deep.

This is the anniversary of the billion dollars you blew at eHealth Ontario, a feeding frenzy for Liberal-friendly consultants like the Courtyard Group. Instead of care for cancer patients at Cancer Care Ontario, you spent money on cupcakes. At WSIB, support for injured workers went into a GPS system for your chair so he could find his way home after months and months of travel—and \$10,000 to the Disney corporation to entertain your bureaucrats at the LHINs.

Premier, you have changed. Will you do the right thing and support the motion of my colleague Ms. Elliott to end this practice of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows, again, and I think it's important that Ontarians understand, that every time we've moved to introduce greater accountability and transparency, they have opposed that.

My honourable colleague is given to rhetoric. He seems to enjoy and luxuriate in that particular forum. But I think results actually count to Ontarians.

Let me talk a little bit about what we've done in health. We have funded 2.1 million new procedures in order to reduce wait times. Angiographies, for example: Wait times are down by 52%. Angioplasty: 46%—that means down 13 days. Cataract surgeries are down 195 days. Hip replacements are down 176 days. Knee replacements are down by 255 days.

I'll put our record up against their rhetoric any day of the week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: A clear pattern has developed where Premier McGuinty only talks about accountability when his government gets caught with their hands in the cookie jar and families are forced to pay the bill. Premier, you know the reality: You only banned expenses after we caught you; you only banned sole-sourced contracts after we caught you. And now, hopefully you'll do something about lobbyists being paid through hospital budgets, but it comes after you got caught out yet again.

Here is your chance, Premier. We have a motion standing before the assembly today to prohibit hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario—we want those dollars to go into front-line care, not in the pockets of lobbyists. Premier, will you support the Ontario PC motion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would ask Ontarians to ask themselves why it is that when we asked the Auditor General to begin to do value-for-money audits for our hospitals, the official opposition opposed that. Again, there's rhetoric and results, and I'll take results any day.

Here are a few more: One million more Ontarians have access to family doctors. We have 19 new MRI

machines in place and double the number of MRI hours of operation. There are now 2,300 more doctors practising in the province of Ontario. We have 170 family health teams; we're on our way to 200 in total. Those 170 are seeing 2.3 million new patients. We've hired over 10,000 new nurses. We've increased our hospital funding—100 hospital infrastructure projects, and so on and so forth. Again, at the end of the day, it's about results, not rhetoric.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said that hospitals don't need to hire lobbyists. Does he feel the same way about colleges and universities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what we're talking about here is a new era of accountability and a new era of transparency. We're making it very clear that the rules that were deemed to be acceptable by the former NDP government, the rules that were deemed to be acceptable by the former Conservative government, are not acceptable to us. They're not in keeping with Ontario's standards and they're not in keeping with our values. That's why we have put in place a number of new rules that heighten accountability and introduce greater transparency.

We will continue to look at these things. We'll continue to look for ways to make progress. In each and every instance that we do so, I ask again: Why is it that both opposition parties stand in the way of that progress? They stand in the way of our efforts to introduce more accountability and more transparency to benefit Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Freedom-of-information requests show that Laurentian University spent \$102,000 for the lobbying services of former Liberal staffers David MacNaughton, Andrew Steele and Katie Telford. And York University has three lobbyist contracts worth \$300,000. Why do publicly funded universities feel the need to hire well-connected lobbyists to get things done in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I agree with the leader of the NDP: They have no reason to hire lobbyists. I want to make it very clear that our government—my ministry, my office—has a very good relationship with all of the province's colleges and universities. I meet and speak regularly with presidents and senior officials, as do members of my staff and members of the ministry. In fact, I would hazard to guess that members of my ministry speak with these institutions on an ongoing basis, probably on a daily basis. The fact of the matter is, there is no need for a lobbyist to have contact with my ministry or the government, and as the Premier has indicated, we want to bring in a new dawn of transparency here in Ontario and certainly make it clear that spending public funds on lobbyists is not acceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Lakehead University spent more than \$30,000 on lobbyists last year. Wilfrid Laurier University spent almost \$70,000 on lobbyists. Something is very, very wrong here. Ontario students pay the highest tuition fees in the entire country. Why are universities spending that money on high-priced, well-connected, insider lobbyists?

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Hon. John Milloy: The leader of the NDP can't take yes for an answer. It's simply not okay to spend public money on lobbyists. The Premier has sent that signal. We have sent that signal; myself and other ministers are looking at ways that we can work with our institutions to make sure that this does not happen. I repeat, again, I am in constant contact with all the institutions, as are members of my staff and my ministry. You do not need to have a lobbyist to make representations to this government.

We're moving forward. I ask: Where were the NDP and the Conservatives when they were in power? They certainly did nothing to address this practice, and I'm proud of the leadership of the Premier in this area.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Our publicly funded colleges are also hiring lobbyists. The Ontario College of Art and Design paid \$54,000 for the services of the same lobbyist that Laurentian used; Mohawk College has a \$31,000 contract with the Pathway Group; Lambton College had a contract with the Capital Hill Group for \$55,000.

Why are publicly funded colleges turning to well-connected insider lobbyists to get their issues on the McGuinty government's agenda?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I'm very proud of the ongoing relationship between myself, as minister, my office and my ministry with Ontario's colleges and universities. It's resulted in some of the most significant progress in post-secondary education in decades. We now have 140,000 more students in our colleges and universities. We've seen investments in the billions in infrastructure at our colleges and universities. We've seen an increase in terms of graduation rates at colleges and universities. That has been done in partnership between my ministry and these institutions. They do not need lobbyists to make that progress. As I said, I'm proud of the leadership that the Premier has shown in this regard, and we will certainly be following suit in my ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We found nearly a million dollars being diverted from students to lobbying. These public dollars should be invested in student aid and top-notch researchers, not handouts for well-connected insider lobbyists.

When will the Premier put an end to this practice and put a ban on lobbyists in the public sector once and for all?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I am very proud of the close relationship that we have between this government and Ontario's colleges and universities. We are a government that has invested in our students. We are a government that has introduced supports for tuition. We are a government that has made research and innovation one of our cornerstones.

It's a little passing strange to have the leader of a party that, when they were in power, cut student aid, increased tuition and cut funding to institutions standing up and not talking about the strength of the system—a system that has been built on the very close relationship between us and the institutions directly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that this government has created a culture that forces colleges and universities to rely on high-priced lobbyists. With tuition fees rising and our public institutions being told to do more with less, we can't afford to spend our precious public dollars on fat contracts for insider lobbyists.

Will the Premier do the right thing? Will he finally do the right thing and ban this practice, or will he continue to let his well-connected lobbyist friends cash in with public dollars?

Hon. John Milloy: I am very proud of the progress that has been made in our colleges and universities, but I reject the assertion that they've been asked to do more with less. College and university operating grants have increased by \$1.9 billion, or 73%, since 2002-03. We've invested over \$1.5 billion in additional student support. We have invested billions and billions of dollars in infrastructure. This progress has been made through a close partnership between our government and our ministry and colleges and universities.

I agree with the leader of the NDP: There is no need for them to be spending public money on lobbyists. My ministry will be working to make sure that message is sent loud and clear to the college sector, something they neglected to do when they were in power and something the Conservatives neglected to do when they were in power.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. One year from tomorrow, Ontario families will have a clear choice between the Ontario PCs, who will ensure that what they pay goes to front-line care, or the sweetheart deals for Liberal-friendly consultants and lobbyists that didn't end with the eHealth scandal. For example, the Ontario PC caucus obtained documents that show Courtyard moved on to William Osler health services, one of the hospitals paying consultants to lobby the McGuinty Liberals. Six months ago, we proposed

legislation that would have stopped the waste, but they voted against it.

Will Premier McGuinty admit his mistake, support my motion and finally take real action on a real issue that matters to Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the member from Whitby—Oshawa has put forth a motion. We all look forward to the debate. But let me tell you as clearly as I possibly can that it is simply not okay to use money intended for patient care to hire lobbyists to lobby government. That is not okay. I've been as clear as I can be on that. The Premier has been as clear as he can be on that.

My question to you is: Will you support us as we move forward to make the changes that are necessary? We have not had your support in the past when we have moved to increase transparency and accountability. Will you be with us this time when we make those important changes?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Sadly, nothing has changed; hence the need for our motion. We've uncovered even more proof that the same Liberal-friendly consultants who got rich from the eHealth scandal are now getting rich from hospital consulting and lobbying deals. Courtyard and Accenture have moved on to University Health Network. We also uncovered that Sudbury hospital is paying for McKinsey and Company's contract to give this government advice on health care cuts. It's the same contract we asked about months ago. It's the same hospital, Sudbury media is reporting, that has been putting patients in a bathroom when emergency departments get too busy.

This government has had seven years. Will they give Ontario families the change they are looking for and support our motion to put a stop to McGuinty Liberal waste?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Once again, I don't think we're arguing about anything here. I think we all agree that change has to happen. I can tell you that the member opposite has recommended that that change come in the form of a memo. I can tell you, we are not talking about change in the form of a memo. We are talking about doing something much stronger than a memo.

Again, will you support us, unlike when we came forward with other transparency issues? Will you support us as we move to make sure that money intended for patient care goes to patient care?

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Mauro Orlandi writes about his hydro bill:

"I am writing from Ottawa, Ontario, and am one of the unfortunate few who is being billed using the smart meters (time of day) as well as paying the HST.

"Even after only doing laundry on weekends," as you've recommended, Premier, "and running the dish-

washer on off-peaks, my hydro bill has gone up \$130 per month to \$328 monthly.

"This billing is completely out of control. It has effectively eaten any disposable income I had."

Premier, is Mr. Orlandi going to see some relief or is he going to get hit even harder when the OEB announces the new hydro rates a couple of weeks from now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think our government very clearly, through the leadership of the Premier, about a week or so ago, displayed that we do understand that Ontario families are going through challenging times. That's why we came forward with an initiative that's going to provide relief for those families and relief for seniors through our energy and property tax credit, which is good news for all middle-income families in the province.

It also requires us to make very tough decisions when it comes to ensuring that we do what we need to do in conservation and do what we need to do to build a strong system of energy in this province. The member opposite joined me last week when we were at an event in his riding, in partnership with the lung association, as we celebrated the removal of four coal units from our system, cleaning our air, building a stronger system of energy, a more reliable system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?
1100

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier didn't have a good answer on that one. I'll try the second part.

Reema Bindari writes: "I have noticed about a \$150 increase on my hydro bill on a monthly basis and have had to take my child out of his extracurricular activity to maintain our lifestyle.

"I can only imagine what other people are going through. This is unfair and unjust."

The people of Ontario want an honest answer. Is Ms. Bindari going to get hit even harder when the OEB announces the new hydro rates a couple of weeks from now?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to go back to the event that the member and I attended just last Friday. I want to share with the Legislature a story about a lady who attended that event. She's an ambassador with the lung association. She introduced me to something that she said was her best friend: It was her respirator. She said to me, "Brad, I want you to express to the Premier my appreciation for the courage that he's expressing, for the courage that he has demonstrated, in taking the decisions necessary to get us off coal, to clean our air and help the thousands of Ontarians like me suffering from a respiratory illness." I appreciated the member joining us in the celebration, but it requires decisions in order to get there.

My question to the member opposite and his leader: Do you also have the courage to make the necessary decisions to help this lady and the thousands like her suffering from a respiratory illness across this province?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is to the Minister of Energy as well. Southwestern Ontario has one of the most highly skilled workforces anywhere in Canada. When the Green Energy Act was introduced, there was a lot of buzz in my part of the province around the jobs that would be coming to Ontario and the economy that would be built around clean energy. I know that many large-scale projects are in progress or coming online across the province, creating opportunities. This is good for the environment, and it's good for the economy.

My question is this: Can the minister provide some tangible examples of jobs and investment in southwestern Ontario as a result of the Green Energy Act?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for joining myself and a number of members in this Legislature, from all sides of the House, ironically, as we celebrated this very, very important day, not only for clean energy in this province, but an important day for our economy, as we talked about, announced and moved forward with initiatives that are creating thousands of jobs across this province, and more particularly in southwestern Ontario.

I want to thank the member opposite for his leadership. I want to thank my colleague the member from Lambton as well, who joined us and was very supportive of the initiatives that were taken. I suggest the member opposite have a little talk with his leader, who does not support those very important jobs that we're working so hard to create, not only in his riding but in all of southwestern Ontario. It was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Being home to the largest online solar farm in the world is something that southwestern Ontario can take a great deal of pride in. It's physical proof of the direction this government is taking while looking at the future of energy in this province. There's no doubt about the advantages that clean renewables hold for Ontario. The Green Energy Act makes this clean energy a reality and creates an economy to go along with it.

My question is: On top of the thousands of manufacturing and construction jobs, and bringing clean energy online, what other benefits does the Green Energy Act hold for people in southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can tell the member that one of the big added benefits for the people of southwestern Ontario—all Ontarians—is the fact that we're bringing renewable energy online and that that's helping us shut down coal plants in this province.

On Friday, as I said earlier, I was with the Ontario Lung Association to announce the permanent closing of two coal units at Nanticoke and two coal units at Lambton, a coal plant that the member would certainly be quite familiar with. I was joined by physicians, nurses and average Ontarians, young and old, who, frankly, are having difficulty, many of them, just simply breathing.

I want to quote the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, which said: "Nurses are pleased with today's

announcement because it will save lives. We know up to 250 deaths each year are directly related to the burning of coal. Getting rid of toxins such as mercury and lead would reduce the estimated 100,000 asthma attacks and other illnesses that people suffer as a result of pollution from coal."

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. One year from now, Ontario families will face a choice to ensure their tax dollars are spent for front-line care. Premier McGuinty has made no effort to stop putting his expensive health experiments ahead of priorities that matter to Ontario families. Children whose parents need long-term care want a leader who is focused on their priorities: creating long-term-care beds or options for appropriate alternate care.

You created bloated regional health bureaucracies and paid them a quarter of a billion dollars to deal with long-term care. The money is spent, but wait-lists for beds have doubled. What will it take for Premier McGuinty to change the direction he is taking Ontario long-term care in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question.

When it comes to long-term care, we are making significant investments. We've now opened over 8,000 new long-term-care beds. In fact, just this past weekend we opened a long-term-care home in London, Ontario. We're adding more capacity in long-term-care beds: We've got plans to open another 1,600 or more beds.

But what we are really doing that is innovative and really making a difference for seniors is, we are investing in keeping people at home as long as they possibly can be. What we are doing is, we're making strategic investments so that people can delay or avoid altogether moving into long-term-care homes.

We are seeing results. I had the pleasure of meeting Keith Cooper, who actually had moved from long-term care into his own home because of the work of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Your priority is making work for Liberal friends; the priority of children with elderly parents is making sure mom or dad have at least one bath per week. Your priority is to ensure your bloated bureaucracies are able to hire Disney actors and entertain them while they live it up at the Windsor casino; their priority is ensuring that mom and dad don't have to wait 24 hours for someone to pick them up if they fall. Your priority, on the other hand, is to defend LHIN consultants, like Jay Connor, who bills for Starbucks in Tennessee; their priority is to make sure mom and dad don't have to eat food that's left on the counter to go bad.

Why do you think your priorities matter more than the priorities of Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that the rhetoric contained in that question was nothing short of astonishing. It comes from a party that is publicly committed to cutting \$3 billion out of health care. I don't know where they're going to find \$3 billion, but let me tell you, it is not going to result in better care for people.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order. The government side is shouting down their own member, and I'm trying to hear the minister's answer.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have increased funding for long-term care by over \$1 billion a year since we were elected in 2003. We are working very hard with long-term care to see improved quality of care, and we're seeing remarkable results: fewer falls, fewer people with pressure ulcers, fewer cases of depression. We're seeing excellent results as we build the capacity outside of hospitals and outside of long-term care.

Our plan is working for the people of Ontario; their plan is to cut back.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you know that the Abitibi paper mill in Iroquois Falls is one of the most efficient plants in the chain of Abitibi when it comes to operating paper mills. Why? Because they generate their own electricity, and it's a lot cheaper than buying it from you.

There is now a situation where Abitibi is looking at selling those dams off to the private sector to basically go into the generation business.

My question to you is simply this, on behalf of the people of Iroquois Falls and region: Will you say today categorically that you will not allow those dams to be separated from the production facility in Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer the question. Certainly our government has heard from municipal representatives, northern mayors specifically, about the potential adverse effects that they predict, should a sale occur, on the people of the communities of Iroquois Falls and Fort Frances. We've very aware of the historical significance of the hydroelectric stations and the arrangements in place that provide the electricity for local pulp and paper production. We absolutely share the concerns regarding how AbitibiBowater's business decisions will have the potential to negatively impact mill workers and healthy northern communities.

1110

I have written to Abitibi and I've requested that if there is a sale of the majority of shares to ACHLP, which owns the dams, Abitibi will continue to guarantee that they will satisfactorily perform to the terms and conditions of the water power leases.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But Madam Minister, that is the crux of the issue. The water power lease agreements say that those dams need to be associated with the mill so we can produce paper in that community at a lesser price so that we can keep it open. There is a concern on the part of the municipal council. They responded to your letter on September 27, where they're basically asking you for a copy of the water lease agreement because, quite frankly, they fear that this government is going to go forward with the sale of those dams and that mill in Abitibi may end up shutting down as a result.

I ask you this on behalf of the council: Are you prepared to share what's in the water lease agreements with the municipality of Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I have met with Mayor Gilles Forget and other representatives of the town of Iroquois Falls to discuss the future of the hydroelectric dams. They've been very passionate about their choices to have us be their spokesperson on this issue.

Certainly MNR has not received any formal proposal around the sale of the dams, but, as I said, I've indicated that we've requested that Abitibi provide written confirmation of the guarantee that we've requested. Through this measure I think we're signalling to Abitibi and the short list of bidders that our government is serious about the issue of power, particularly in Iroquois Falls, and we support those northern communities because we know how important those jobs are. We're certainly in their corner and we're going to be working very closely with them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, the member from Kenora–Rainy River brought up an issue in his riding. A senior in Fort Frances received a letter regarding new long-term-care beds in Terrace Bay. He stated:

"Two weeks ago, she received a letter from the North West Community Care Access Centre, telling her that a long-term-care bed is open to her in Terrace Bay....

"Is this the McGuinty Liberals' idea of quality long-term care for Ontario seniors? Send them 550 kilometres—seven hours—away from their family and friends?"

Could the minister please tell this House what this letter was all about and if people in this province are being forced to move farther away from their homes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to commend the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for being such a champion for his constituents.

I want to make it very clear: This government does not force seniors to move far away from their loved ones to go into long-term care. We do our very best to keep them as close to home as possible. That's why we've opened 8,300 new long-term-care beds, including 22 beds in Terrace Bay, thanks to the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North. The CCAC was simply informing all

people on their waiting list that there was a new option available. It is completely wrong to suggest that there was any forcing going on.

This is what the letter says: "We have reviewed our long-term-care home waiting lists and are notifying all clients of the opening of this new long-term-care home. Please ... let us know whether or not you are interested in applying...."

Further, it says, "If you choose to apply"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm relieved, as I'm sure others are, to hear that this was simply a huge misinterpretation by the member.

I understand how important quality care is for residents and their families. In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I know that residents were very concerned in 2005 when the city of Thunder Bay announced it would no longer be operating two municipal long-term-care homes. Recognizing this challenge, the LHIN and the Ministry of Health worked with St. Joseph's health care to develop the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services. In response, our government is investing in new long-term-care home beds at this centre, and I know that seniors will soon have even greater access to health care services with the construction of this new facility.

Could the minister please tell this House more about the centre and how it will benefit seniors in my riding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to report on the progress of the Centre of Excellence for Integrated Seniors' Services in Thunder Bay. This facility will have 336 long-term-care beds. A hundred and nine of those are new beds; the rest are redeveloped. A hundred and thirty-two supportive housing units offer more choices to seniors. They will promote their independence so they can continue to live with dignity and with respect.

The centre will respond to local populations' increasing demand for seniors' services, so they will also be able to provide community support services for an additional 150 clients and enhanced services for existing supportive housing units.

This is a centre of excellence that will make a profound difference for the people of Thunder Bay and will have implications right across this province as we learn from the work that is happening in northwestern Ontario.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Your regulation 440/08 is a response to the Sunrise Propane explosion. You require risk and safety management plans by the end of this year, yet there are only about four or five qualified professional engineers in Ontario to prepare them.

Minister, will you suspend this regulation and work with propane dealers to write a sensible regulation?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, of course, the member would surely agree that the safety and protection

of the people of Ontario is paramount. It was with that in mind that right after this unfortunate event happened two years ago, we had an expert panel convened of two of the most prominent experts in the country to deal with this situation. They wrote a report. A regulation was passed almost two years ago. Since then, we've been looking at the implementation of that regulation, which will happen as of January 1, 2011.

We totally agree that there are different standards that should be applied to different sizes of organizations. We are working right now with the propane industry, we're working with the expert panel and we're working with the TSSA to come up with a system that will be sensible for all so that these businesses can remain in operation, but also so that society and the people of Ontario can be protected to the best of our ability.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Minister, each plan costs \$25,000, an amount that will force 90% of Ontario's propane refill installations to close. Rural areas depend on propane. Campgrounds and recreation vehicles depend on propane. You are destroying tourism, small businesses and small communities. Surely there is a way to address safety concerns without turning the lights off on small businesses. Minister, will you withdraw this regulation until you get it right?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I indicated to the member before, we are working on the situation right now for both the large facilities and the smaller facilities. We are working towards a solution, but the safety of the people of Ontario is absolutely paramount. We've got that in mind.

We want to make sure that, at the end of the day, we've got a system that the fire services and municipalities can live with, that the operators can live with, that the TSSA can live with, so that the people of Ontario can be protected to the best of our ability. We're working on that, and if the member stays tuned there will be an announcement made on that fairly shortly.

COURT INTERPRETERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. There are more than 640,000 Chinese Canadians in Ontario. More than 70,000 speak only Mandarin. Why does this province have no accredited Mandarin court interpreters?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, we have a group of interpreters in the province of Ontario who are as good and qualified as any throughout the country. What we've worked to do over the years—the past two years in particular—is to support and improve their qualifications. One of the things we have found in the course of that is that we need some extra in certain languages. That's actually one of the things that has come out of the extended review of the qualifications.

We're going to work to find and accredit as many interpreters as we can in all the necessary languages for

court proceedings. We're going to keep working on that until we have as many as we need.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

1120

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a serious matter that could compromise the integrity of our justice system. The province is relying on unaccredited individuals to act as court interpreters. Let's be clear: These are people who have failed the government's interpretation testing.

I'm sure the government wouldn't allow an unaccredited surgeon to operate or an unaccredited pilot to fly the Premier's plane. Why are they allowing unaccredited language interpreters in our courts?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think the leader of the third party's question touches the important point: that these are qualified people. The accreditation process was undertaken to support and enhance qualifications that are generally acknowledged to be as good as or better than anywhere else in the country, so the analogy drawn by the leader of the third party is not an accurate one.

We're going to make sure we have fully qualified people to do the interpretation at every case that's required. One of the advantages of instituting this new approach, which has had some communications challenges, is that we're in fact identifying where we need to do more—and we can do more and find more accredited, qualified people.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

On January 12, 2010, we received the shocking news that Haiti, one of the world's most impoverished countries, was hit with a series of 7.0-magnitude earthquakes, causing catastrophic destruction. Buildings all over Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince were reduced to rubble, killing and injuring thousands of people.

In my riding of Brant, I witnessed an overwhelming act of charity for those affected by the devastation of the earthquake. Students in my riding who attended the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, the Grand Erie District School Board and the private schools took action and raised over \$60,000 in support of Haiti. It is truly an amazing example of the power of charity and the compassion our children have displayed for those who need it most in a time of crisis.

I know that the member from Eglinton—Lawrence recently attended a Haiti-related announcement in his riding. Minister, would you please provide with us an update on this announcement?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question.

First of all, hats off to the students of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board and the Grand Erie District School Board.

The earthquake, I think we all know, was a devastating occurrence in Haiti, and the support of the people of Haiti shown by communities throughout Ontario and Canada has been truly inspiring.

In my constituency of St. Catharines, I've received much correspondence concerning relief efforts, and I've witnessed the creation of many community-based initiatives in support of Haiti.

The people of Haiti needed help and Ontarians were quick to respond, none more quickly than the school kids. The unequivocal support that our children, Ontario's students, have shown for Haitians in need is truly inspiring.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence recently spoke at Lawrence Park Collegiate Institute, where students collected more than \$12,700 for the Canadian Red Cross and Free the Children's Haiti fund. In total, Toronto—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I know it's easy to say that I'm proud of the students in the riding, but I am absolutely convinced that every member in this House is proud of the way the students in their ridings responded and, indeed, of all of the students across Ontario for stepping up for those in need.

The youth of Ontario have shown great character. We should all be proud of the strength and leadership shown by our youth. Their actions do make a difference around the world.

As an educator, I truly believe that our children's actions are the reflection of their parents' and their teachers' efforts to instill in them a sense of charity. Alongside of our government's effort to create strong social leaders, together we are helping our students create positive local and global change.

The earthquake that destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed infrastructure through Haiti: schools, hospitals and roads. Haiti requires continued support in rebuilding after the earthquake, and in particular with the redevelopment of the infrastructure, which is the key component to Haiti's recovery. Would the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question.

I can tell the member that the province is moving forward to rebuild three public schools in Port-au-Prince. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence announced that a request for proposals to design and construct the three schools has been issued. We hope to announce the successful bidder by mid-November. All three schools were destroyed by the earthquake and have been identified by Haiti's national ministry of education as priorities for rebuilding.

These buildings will be constructed in a manner that makes them disaster-resilient, pursuant to the internationally recognized California building code. Construction of these schools will begin in early 2011. Each school will have about nine classrooms, plus rooms for administration, meals and other supports, and access to water, sewage treatment and electricity.

It's a matter of thanking the students in this province and the government working with those students to assist those who are devastated by the earthquake—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. There's been a great deal of controversy over the closing of the lake sturgeon fishing industry in the entire province of Ontario as it's listed as "threatened."

In a recent article in the Sault Star, it was stated that the ministry saw far more sturgeon than they ever expected in Lake Superior. Why would you close sturgeon fishing province-wide and place sturgeon on the threatened list when the data continues to clearly show that it's not?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank the member for the question. My ministry works very hard with a lot of fish management zone councils to evaluate the health of fish throughout the province of Ontario, and certainly any decisions we make are on the basis of science. We use the science to inform the decisions we make, and we work with local fish management zone councils to make sure that we have the best information. We're happy to look at all the science-based information in order to make those decisions. We work closely with the local areas and our stakeholders to make those decisions, and they are informed by the science.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, your own report, *The Lake Sturgeon in Ontario*, July 2009, states: "The impacts of dams and hydroelectric facilities appears to be the single largest impediment to the recovery of sturgeon in Ontario. Ironically, the threat to sturgeon as a result of the construction of large dams is expected to increase as the province of Ontario looks to increase the number of new hydroelectric sites to meet future energy demands."

Recreational anglers had no effect on sturgeon populations, but the McGuinty government's Green Energy Act threatens the habitat for sturgeon even more. It appears that the MNR is admitting that the Green Energy Act is going to have a detrimental effect on sturgeon populations.

Minister, why are you ignoring your own report and punishing recreational anglers?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think that's a stretch to make that leap. I think our quota systems and our science are all informed by the long-term sustainability of our fish populations and, ultimately, the economic viability of the commercial fishing industry and fish-based communities. We work with lots of other communities. We work with the US border communities to reach agreements on what kind of fishing stock is available, the quota and the health of those populations. So I would say that the fluctuations in the quotas and the sustainability of fish populations are informed by the science, whether it's the water lake levels, the temperature in those lakes, or the health and sustainability of those fish populations. We work with the scientists and we work with our fish management zone

councils, and we appreciate their advice. That helps inform the decisions we make at my ministry.

SOLDIERS' REMAINS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. On May 19, I asked the Premier if he would fund a proper archaeological excavation, burial and recognition for the fallen soldiers of the War of 1812. The Premier said, "I think there's a legitimate issue here, and we undertake to look into it," which left the impression of a positive outcome.

Why has the Premier allowed the funding to be refused?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the minister is going to want to speak to this in more detail, but I think, in fairness, in trying to introduce a modicum of objectivity into the workings of this place, when my honourable colleague raised that issue with me, I did, in fact, say that I would agree to look into it. I didn't say anything more and I didn't say anything less.

I've had the opportunity to look into it, I've had the opportunity to speak with the Minister of Tourism, and we've landed on a decision. I'll allow the minister to speak to that more directly momentarily.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Premier's office quite rightly takes the lead on recognition of fallen police officers, firefighters and other emergency services, as well as Remembrance Day ceremonies. But in the case of these fallen soldiers, the Premier fobs off the funding request to the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Why is this Premier's office not taking the lead on and funding the proper reinterment and recognition of these fallen heroes, the soldiers of the War of 1812?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question from the honourable member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

I'm proud to advise that our government, so far, has invested \$27 million in funding into the War of 1812. The War of 1812 is an important element in our history. It is said that Canada was saved because of the war.

With regard to the city of Hamilton's request, it's not within my ministry's mandate. That said, our government has invested another \$1 million to assist seven regional groups in planning and developing 1812 activities across the province. This includes the western corridor bicentennial alliance, which represents the city of Hamilton.

I appreciate the significance of the battle of Stoney Creek, and I encourage the city of Hamilton to discuss their project with this alliance so that we can come up with a proposal to address the situation.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As governments of all

levels face tough fiscal decisions in these lean times, there is a concern that the municipal budget shortfalls will translate into a reduction in services or the quality of services for Ontarians.

We all know that municipal elections across the province are rightly providing for discussion on these circumstances. I have noticed, however, that in my community and elsewhere, there is a perception and commentary suggesting that at least part of this fiscal challenge is a result of the province downloading services or costs onto municipal governments.

My question: Minister, is this correct?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for the question. He raises a very good question. It's one that I think we should all pay close attention to.

We are in the process of uploading a variety of costs, which will provide a net benefit of \$1.8 billion to municipalities by 2018. This will see more than \$41 million saved in the member's riding of Ottawa this year alone, with an estimated benefit of more than \$122 million by 2018.

There are a few interesting statistics. It will see every riding under the official opposition's watch save roughly \$250 million this year alone. It will also see every riding under the third party's watch save roughly \$220 million this year alone. So I find it very, very difficult to understand why they voted against—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Ontarians can remember a time when this was not the case. I am very proud that our government has taken bold action in the last seven years to reverse the pitfalls of reckless downloading and the degradation of services that accompany that ideological approach, but my constituents know very well that the province is also managing difficult economic circumstances and is exercising a plan to recover from deficits brought about from the biggest recession since the Second World War.

Can the minister assure my constituents that this government will not, unlike past governments, look to downloading services on the backs of local governments?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. It's a very important one.

It is important to point out that while the two opposition parties did not support these measures—in fact, they voted against them—it is quite the landmark agreement and has received strong support from the 444 municipalities that are affected.

Our plan is to carry through with the agreement we entered into. So we are uploading Ontario Works benefits, saving municipalities \$425 million, and court security costs, which will save municipalities \$125 million by 2018. This year, we begin our upload on the ODSP program and are finishing that upload in 2011, which will save municipalities \$340 million. The Ontario drug benefit upload will save municipalities \$158 million.

So unlike the previous NDP and Harris-Hudak regimes, we are about working with municipalities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Premier. Premier, about two weeks ago, in an answer to my question, you indicated that you were going to undertake a new look at the request of Nortel pensioners. I would hope that you would outline to me the process that you and your finance minister are going through with regard to their request. Would you also indicate whether or not you are going to enter into public meetings so that all Nortel pensioners and legislators here can hear the answers to the questions that the Nortel pensioners are putting to the government? I believe the government owes these pensioners the right to have their questions answered in public so that everyone knows what the risks and benefits are for the Nortel pensioners.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the Premier indicated, we are undertaking a review. There have been ongoing discussions with the principals involved, representing a number of the pensioners. Just as we responded with \$250 million to protect the first \$1,000 of pension money, we take these all of these issues very seriously and want to work with all retirees, all former members of the plan, to try to resolve this in a way that protects the interests of as many of the Nortel pensioners as possible. We are continuing that review.

DEFERRED VOTES

NARCOTICS SAFETY AND AWARENESS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA SENSIBILISATION EN MATIÈRE DE STUPÉFIANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on second reading of Bill 101. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Ms. Matthews has moved second reading of Bill 101. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Murdoch, Bill
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hampton, Howard	O'Toole, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Savoline, Joyce
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Levac, Dave	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Craitor, Kim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Elliott, Christine	Mitchell, Carol	Yakabuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 89; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of guests?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So it's too hot today? It was too cold yesterday.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I guess things are going well for the Speaker when he knows he can't satisfy either side of the House. Things are all right.

There being no introductions, it's time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCENIC CITY ORDER OF GOOD CHEER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I rise in the House today to recognize two important community projects undertaken in Owen Sound by the Scenic City Order of Good Cheer,

a non-profit group made up of executive and associate members.

One of the projects is a new bandstand at Grey Roots Museum and Archives. More than 30 people dedicated time, muscle and diligence to complete what was initially thought to be a small job. A year and a half later, the bandstand is a proud complement to the museum's period buildings. It is representative of a bandstand from the 1920s, except ours is completely accessible for wheel-chairs and strollers. The Good Cheer Bandstand was designed by architect G.M. Diemert, under the leadership of project manager John Hopper.

The second project is a quarter-million-dollar splash pad project at Kelso Beach Park in Owen Sound. After four years of raising money for the pad, the Good Cheer group, which most recently built an artificial outdoor ice rink at Harrison Park, has secured an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$50,000 and another \$30,000 from the city of Owen Sound. When the pad officially opens next spring, it will feature water guns, mist sprays and water geysers. At completion of this project, the Order of Good Cheer will have contributed approximately \$1.6 million into the city of Owen Sound and surrounding area in the last 20 years.

All these community projects were made possible by a small group of people with big ideas, leadership and vision, and our community will be forever indebted to them for their exceptional efforts over the years.

WORLD JUNIOR BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Bill Mauro: This summer, from July 23 to August 1, the world junior baseball under-19 championships were held in Thunder Bay. Teams from Australia, Chinese Taipei, Cuba, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Korea, the Netherlands, Panama, the US and Canada attended and competed. The event was held at Port Arthur Stadium and Baseball Central, and both sites were in incredible condition to host an event of this calibre.

I was very pleased that our government was able to support these championships in a very substantial way. Back in 2005, we provided \$50,000 for upgrades to Baseball Central. The Ministry of Health Promotion provided \$200,000 in funding, and an additional \$350,000 came from the northern Ontario heritage fund. Funding from other sources brought the total provincial support for these championships to over \$700,000.

The volunteers put on a world-class sporting event, and that doesn't surprise me. I've seen the extraordinary things that the people of Thunder Bay are capable of. Thunder Bay is home to a large number of hard-working volunteers who have gained a reputation for organizing first-rate events. I know that those who attended the championships this summer from all over the world were thrilled with the quality of everything that was connected to the event.

Congratulations to my old friend and baseball teammate, Warren Philp, and his incredible team of volunteers. They put in so many hours over so many years to

bring the world championships to our city and we're all very proud of what they accomplished, not only for baseball fans but to the benefit of the city and the district of Thunder Bay.

Way to go, Thunder Bay! You did it again.

NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am pleased to rise today to recognize National Family Week, running from October 4 to 10. National Family Week was proclaimed an official week by the government of Canada in 1985.

Falling the week before Thanksgiving, it is a time dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the benefits and the strengths of family. This week encourages us to reflect on and appreciate the importance of family to our lives, our communities, our province and our nation.

National Family Week also gives us the opportunity to thank those child and family service organizations in our ridings that work tirelessly, often under tight financial constraints, to provide services to our most vulnerable families.

The theme of this year's National Family Week is Families Connecting through Stories, and celebrates the joys of reading and storytelling. Whether it's reading from a book or sharing real-life experiences of our parents and grandparents, storytelling allows us to make new memories and reconnect with loved ones.

I invite all families to unplug the electronics this week and enjoy the simple pleasure of each other's company.

DO THE MATH CHALLENGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today a little hungrier than I was yesterday because I'm doing the Do the Math diet, on which you have to live for up to a week on what people get when they go to a food bank. Five of my caucus members are doing it as well. I would challenge the rest of the House to join me on that.

It's a very interesting experience. In the process of living on Kraft dinner, rice, a loaf of bread, and a can of pork and beans, I am indebted to the two most amazing providers of food to those who are needy in my riding. St. Francis Table has been doing it for 23 years and are about to serve their millionth meal. Here's to Brother John, who's been keeping that going, among many others, and Robert Thorpe at Parkdale Community Food Bank, serving—on the increase, by the way, unfortunately—members of the Parkdale community.

I can tell you that both these establishments wished they didn't have to exist. I know that Brother John would love to serve the millionth meal and be done with it. I know that Robert Thorpe at Parkdale food bank would love to serve the last customer and be done with it because there were no lineups and because there was nobody needy in the province.

I stand here, and I hope not alone, in desiring that outcome. I grew up in a province where this wasn't the

case; I'd like to retire in a province where this is not the case.

EVENTS IN GLENGARRY-PRESCOTT-RUSSELL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Last Thursday, I had the honour of attending the 3rd Annual Township of North Glengarry Business and Volunteer Awards in Maxville. Some 300 citizens of North Glengarry were present for the ceremony and everyone in attendance was delighted to be celebrating the spirit of North Glengarry.

I would like to acknowledge those who were awarded at the gala: citizen of the year, Réjean Belanger of Glengarry Community Living; community service award, Glengarry Memorial Hospital Auxiliary volunteers; business of the year, Richard Ranger of Tapis Richard Ranger in Alexandria; excellence in agriculture, Jack and Linda Fraser and sons of Fraserlock Farms; entrepreneur business of the year, Rob Merriman of Home Hardware, Maxville; youth merit award, Tori Conway; senior merit award, the remarkable Betty McCormick; dedication and leadership, Bonnie McDonald of Glengarry News; and finally, lifetime achievement award, Gerald Trottier.

1510

I would like to share with everyone in this House that Maxville is also the home of the Glengarry Highland Games, one of the largest Highland games in the world. The next games are July 29 and 30, 2011.

DEVONSHIRE COMMUNITY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Today in this Legislature, it's my great pleasure to recognize Devonshire public school, which is located in Hintonburg, in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

Devonshire is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. There will be a great celebration which will take place on October 15 with teachers, students and parents. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend that celebration, so I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Devonshire public school and all the teachers, students and parents on this great celebration.

Devonshire is a wonderfully diverse inner-city French immersion school named after Governor General Lord Devonshire. It was also recently designated a heritage building. On April 9 of this year, Devonshire kicked off the centennial celebrations by opening a 25-year time capsule left by students from the 75th anniversary celebration—as well as historical activities for the kids.

There will be barbecues and treats on October 15, a big band will be playing, there will be old-fashioned games and memorabilia and a 100th birthday cake, and why not? There's also a speakers' corner for folks to record their thoughts and memories for a new time capsule for, I'm sure, the next 100th anniversary of Devonshire.

I'd like to congratulate Devonshire's principal, Deborah Kuffner, and all the teachers and students for the remarkable work they do at the school. Also, a big thanks to Bruce Tate, who has been the 100th-anniversary coordinator, along with the countless other parents, students and volunteers who have been part of this special celebration.

Congratulations to Devonshire public school in Ottawa Centre.

ORGANIC FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize that next week is Canada's first National Organic Week.

I want to commend Ontario's organic farmers. I know that in addition to working hard like all other farmers, they face some unique challenges and need to be even more innovative. Transitioning to organic is not something that happens overnight. It takes real commitment, and I want to recognize them for that.

Organic farmers, like all Ontario farmers, are affected by the fact that this government is ignoring the fundamentals of agriculture. Organic farmers are suffering the same increased hydro rates. Cows that give organic milk aren't able to wait for time-of-use pricing. Organic farmers, like all our farmers, need support programs that work, programs they can count on whether there is a short-term or long-term drop in market prices. They need more than someone who sings about the good things that grow in Ontario or promises to lobby for them. They need more than someone who stands by while government increases their burden with more taxes, more regulations and less help. They need a strong minister who will take action to ensure that farmers have the basic necessities they need to succeed.

Ontario's organic farmers have done their part. They identified a growing market and did the research and hard work to grow quality Ontario organic food. Now it's time for the government to work with them to ensure that they and Ontario agriculture have a strong future.

PEEL MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL

Mr. Bob Delaney: This Thursday, I will join with the western Mississauga community at the annual general meeting of one of our most vibrant social services and settlement agencies. The Peel Multicultural Council was established in 1977 as a council of ethnic leaders in Mississauga and Brampton. PMC grew to include interested members and other community groups drawn from across the diverse spectrum of the region. Today PMC comprises more than 150 groups, agencies and institutions and more than 350 individuals.

PMC offers such vital community programs as the host program, which matches recent immigrants to experienced Canadians to help newcomers integrate and adjust to life in Canada. The LINC program provides basic language instruction in either English or French.

Job search workshops offer new Canadians assistance with resumé writing, networking techniques and mock interviews. The enhanced language training co-op for internationally trained professionals provides clients with valuable Canadian work experience and coaching in their field.

I thank board president Eric Wen, executive director Naveed Chaudhry—both of whom I've known for nearly 20 years—and all of the other staff, volunteers and newcomers that serve the Peel Multicultural Council and make our western Mississauga neighbourhoods a vibrant place to live, work and raise a family.

IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Phil McNeely: The McGuinty government is committed to helping our newcomers succeed by investing in services they need to get settled in Ontario. Each year, Ontario receives almost half of all new immigrants that come to the country. We benefit tremendously from immigrants who choose Ontario as their new home.

We also recognize the valuable contributions that our newcomers make to our social vitality and our economic prosperity. That is why we are calling on the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement by spending the remaining \$207 million they promised Ontario newcomers.

We are also calling on Ottawa to immediately begin negotiations on a comprehensive new immigration agreement that provides Ontario with adequate funding, planning and governance to help our newcomers succeed.

As Ontario's workforce ages and as Ontario's birth rate declines, immigrants will make up a significant portion of our labour force growth. Their contributions will help our economy remain strong in a globally competitive world. So I ask all members of this Legislature to stand up for Ontario's newcomers by urging the Harper government to invest in our newcomers and immediately commence negotiations with the government of Ontario. The success of our newcomers depends on it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I beg leave to present a report on the unfunded liability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The Auditor General's 2009 annual report contained a review of the unfunded liability of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, or WSIB, and as everyone in this House knows, this has been the

bane of the existence of governments for years and years. The auditor reported that "the assets in the WSIB insurance fund are substantially less than what is needed to satisfy the estimated lifetime costs of all claims currently in the system."

The unfunded liability at this point—this point being December 31, 2008, as of the audit—was at \$11.5 billion, which was an increase of \$3.4 billion over the prior year. We don't know what it is today, but it's significantly more, I would expect.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held hearings on the auditor's review of the WSIB unfunded liability in February, and the committee report being tabled today makes 10 recommendations directed to the Ministry of Labour and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. I'll just include three of them so members can get a bit of an idea. One is that "information is required from the WSIB on its consultations with the Ministry of Labour regarding whether or not the WSIB would support legislative changes requiring it to become fully funded." Another is that "the WSIB is to report on the outcome of its review of the way it sets premium rates." Finally, "the WSIB is to report on whether it achieved its target of a 7% reduction of new claims in 2009 and, if not, what action is being taken in 2010 on this issue."

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 5, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: During ministerial statements.

1520

G20 PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT LA TENUE D'UNE ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE SUR LE SOMMET DU G20

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 111, An Act to require a public inquiry into government action and spending in connection with the G20 summit / Projet de loi 111, Loi exigeant la tenue d'une enquête publique sur les mesures prises et les dépenses engagées par le gouvernement dans le cadre du Sommet du G20.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This bill requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint a commission under the Public Inquiries Act to inquire into and report on the decisions and actions of the government of Ontario and of Ontario's law enforcement agencies in connection with the G20 summit held in Toronto on June 26 and June 27, 2010.

Specifically, the commission is required to inquire into and report on whether the fundamental rights and freedoms of Ontarians were compromised and how money was spent by the province in connection with the summit. The commission is required to make recommendations on how to manage similar events that may be held in Ontario in the future and to submit an interim and a final report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

TONUM LTD. ACT, 2010

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Tonum Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (TENANTS' RIGHTS), 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (DROITS DES LOCATAIRES)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 112, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to tenants' rights / Projet de loi

112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard des droits des locataires.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill makes several amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, including, among others, the following:

The bill prohibits a landlord from increasing the rent charged to a new tenant by more than the guideline and abolishes landlord applications to the board for above-guideline rent increases where there has been a significant increase in the cost of utilities.

The bill requires that the board dismiss an application from a landlord who has been given a work order under section 225 of the act or an order under section 15.2 of the Building Code Act, 1992, and has not completed the items in the work order or the order.

The bill requires a landlord to obtain a licence with respect to a rental unit in a residential complex containing six or more rental units in order to enter into a tenancy agreement or renew an existing tenancy agreement.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe that we have unanimous consent to defer the late show filed Monday, October 4, 2010, by the member from Beaches-East York to the Minister of Children and Youth Services until Wednesday, October 6, 2010, after the House adjourns at 6 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOOD GOVERNANCE

LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to introduce legislation that, if passed, would enhance the services provided to businesses and to the public.

The Good Government Act, 2010, includes approximately 70 items of legislation from seven different ministries, including several changes to the Ministry of the Attorney General statutes.

L'objectif principal de ce projet de loi est de donner suite à la Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires. Si le projet de loi est adopté, il assurera que les structures nécessaires sont en place pour rationaliser les services aux entreprises et au public.

This bill's primary purpose is to build upon our Open for Business legislation. If passed, it would help to ensure the necessary structures are in place to streamline services for businesses and the public.

Most are technical changes to existing acts, but are important because they would improve clarity and keep the law's language current.

A number of these items are good housekeeping measures, but others include initiatives that would make the justice system more effective while giving businesses and the public more flexibility.

In 2006, changes introduced by our government were made to the Justices of the Peace Act which removed the partisan nature of justice of the peace appointments. We recognized how important it was to have qualified individuals sitting on the bench, individuals who were deemed qualified by an independent advisory committee.

Today, our government is proposing amendments that would further enhance our justices of the peace recruitment process, making it a more targeted one.

Similar to what's done for other judicial appointments, advertising would be tailored to the specific needs of the vacant position, as identified by the associate chief justice.

Rather than advertising for potential justices of the peace annually across the province, the Justice of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee could advertise within the region where and when a vacancy occurs. This change would allow the committee more flexibility to recruit candidates who meet the requirements of a particular vacancy, which will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our justice system.

Also, the Good Government Act, if passed, includes a number of amendments to several acts that will transfer responsibility for adjudication over liquor and gaming issues from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario board to the liquor licence tribunal. This would allow the AGCO to focus on its important public policy work.

The AGCO would retain responsibility for the regulation of alcohol and gaming, while the Licence Appeal Tribunal would take over adjudicative matters as directed under the following acts: Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996; Gaming Control Act, 1992; Liquor Licence Act; Vintners Quality Alliance Act, 1999; and the Business Corporations Act, Business Names Act and Corporations Information Act.

Pour terminer, le projet de loi contient plusieurs modifications à ces lois et à d'autres lois qui, si elles sont adoptées, confèreraient une plus grande souplesse pour améliorer les services aux entreprises, faciliter les transactions commerciales et améliorer la capacité du gouvernement à répondre rapidement aux besoins des entreprises.

There are several proposed amendments to these and other acts that would, if passed, provide greater flexibility to improve services to business, facilitate business transactions and improve the government's ability to quickly respond to the needs of business.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take your time. Don't go so fast.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You see, we have, all of a sudden, rampant enthusiasm for the suggestions in this law.

In conclusion, the changes proposed in the Good Government Act, 2010, were not developed in isolation and would affect many citizens, organizations and businesses. Indeed, in some cases, affected organizations have requested the changes and, in other situations, their views were sought through consultation.

The Good Government Act, 2010, includes a number of measures that would increase transparency, enhance accountability, and modernize provincial laws, regulations and systems to further advance the province's five-year Open Ontario plan to create new opportunities for jobs and growth.

1530

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DES ENSEIGNANTS

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Today, I am pleased to rise in the House to honour the countless achievements of teachers who work in Ontario's schools and school boards. Today is World Teachers' Day, an opportunity for us to recognize the outstanding individuals who are making a difference in the lives of Ontario's almost two million students. Each day in our 4,900 publicly funded schools, educators are committed to providing students with a world-class education. Each day they act as role models, leaders and mentors.

Aujourd'hui, je souhaite les remercier pour leurs efforts soutenus et leurs réalisations remarquables qui contribuent à l'excellence en éducation.

Thank you to the educators who support students as they overcome all manner of challenges—academic and non-academic. Thank you to the educators whose energy and creativity in the classroom helps prepare students for the next step in life, whether that is secondary school, post-secondary education or the workforce. Thank you to the educators who motivate students to engage in the arts, reading, math, science, technology and athletics. You inspire public confidence in our schools and engage entire communities in support of student achievement. Your determination to reach the hearts and minds of every student gives them the confidence that they need to pursue their dreams and overcome any obstacles to their success.

Vous avez compris que pour libérer le potentiel des élèves, vous devez exiger d'eux qu'ils dépassent leurs limites.

Your understanding that pushing students to their limits is key to unlocking their success is evident.

Nothing more powerfully defines Ontario's publicly funded education system than the individual impressions of those who experience it every day. Students, parents, teachers and the whole of the education community are excited that student achievement in literacy and numeracy is on the rise, that struggling students continue to be supported like never before, and that more students are graduating from high schools. We have the educators who work in our schools and school boards to thank for that. It is our government's commitment to continue to work in partnership with our teachers; a partnership that has seen seven years of labour peace and stability that has allowed all parties to focus on excellence in education.

This is an achievement, one that I know is highly respected and valued by students and parents, both of whom benefit from a stable, publicly funded education system. We have made significant investments in our schools from buildings and resources to new and exciting programs such as full-day kindergarten.

Mais nous reconnaissons que ce sont le dévouement et la diligence des personnes qui travaillent dans nos écoles et conseils scolaires qui transforment ces investissements en résultats concrets.

We had the opportunity, while hosting the recent Building Blocks for Education summit, to celebrate the results and achievement in education in our province. Educators from around the world were very impressed with what we have accomplished together in Ontario.

World Teachers' Day provides us with another opportunity to celebrate these achievements and recognize the educators who have helped accomplish them. Once again, to the educators and support staff across the province, you have my heartfelt thanks for your great work.

ORGANIC WEEK

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I rise today to acknowledge the celebration of all things organic and Organic Week, which begins Thanksgiving weekend and extends to World Food Day on October 16.

I just want to take this opportunity to introduce Jodi Koberinski and Matt LeBeau from the Organic Council of Ontario, and Elizabeth Chrumka from the Canadian Organic Growers. Welcome.

The McGuinty government recognizes the growing importance of the organic sector in the provincial economy. There are almost 700 organic farms in Ontario, covering more than 114,000 acres and producing a wide range of organic crops. Organic production continues to grow across the province each year. The value of Ontario's organic sector is more than \$750 million.

Our five-year Open Ontario plan is about opening the province to new opportunities, new jobs and new growth. We know that organics present a significant growth opportunity for both our agri-food industry and our rural communities. That's why we want to help Ontario's organic sector to expand and to prosper. We have a plan to make that happen. We are strengthening production, processing and promotion for Ontario organics.

Did you know that it takes three years to make the change from a traditional farm to an organic farm? Staff at my ministry are available to help interested producers make this transition. We welcome the national Canadian organic standard, which was introduced in 2009, and we encourage our organic producers in Ontario to earn their certification.

Through our rural economic development program, we have invested more than \$2 million to increase the capacity for organic food processing and help organic processors meet growing consumer demands.

We have also invested more than \$700,000 through the Ontario market investment fund to support the marketing initiatives for a wide variety of organic food that is grown right here in Ontario. This included support for the Organic Council of Ontario to participate in the Toronto Green Living Show. Council members promoted Ontario organics, demonstrating to consumers that they can buy local and organic at the same time.

What's more, we are investing in research and supporting research initiatives to develop greenhouse systems for organic vegetables and transplant products, as well as studies into wheat management and ways to improve organic beekeeping practices.

Organic Meadow is but one of Ontario's great organic success stories. What started as a farmer-owned co-op over 20 years ago transformed into an organic dairy business in the 1990s. This past August, in partnership with Steen's Dairy, they expanded their operations and have opened a new plant in Guelph. Our government proudly supported this venture through the rural economic development program by investing close to \$495,000 in their expansion. This successful partnership will mean the use of more milk produced by local dairy farmers, providing more jobs for local workers and giving consumers more reasons to buy local.

Ontarians know that our farmers grow high-quality food products that are among the best in the world. Buying Ontario means that you are supporting local farmers, helping to grow your community and protecting the environment. We're encouraging people to choose Ontario when they're buying groceries for their family, and that includes Ontario organics.

Across the province, there are a number of unique events planned to celebrate Organic Week, including lectures, local farm tours and gardening workshops. You can find out what's happening in your community by visiting www.organicweek.ca.

I encourage everyone in this Legislature and everyone across this province, whether you're a consumer, producer or organic enthusiast, to get involved and support Ontario organics.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise to talk about the Good Government Act that has just been introduced by the Attorney General.

He talks about 70 items of legislation from seven different ministries. He talks about this bill being introduced to enhance the Open for Business legislation that the government introduced lately and to enhance jobs and growth in Ontario. I sincerely hope that this bill does exactly that. However, given our experience in the most recent past, one must have pause.

Just recently, the regulations, if they are enacted, would take the small businesses that deal with propane in the province of Ontario and make their future extremely dim. If the government continues to ignore illegal tobacco in this province, which is now close to 50% of consumption, the convenience store operators in Ontario will have a very dim future as well, with hundreds of them already closed, most of them because of illegal sales in their neighbourhoods. Pharmacies across this province, particularly small ones, are finding themselves in great difficulties, particularly in rural areas, because of changes that this government has made in the rules surrounding pharmacies. And, of course, the HST has been introduced, which affects different businesses in different ways, and some of it not in a very positive way.

1540

The regulation and re-regulation this government has burdened Ontario with has required the additional use of consultants, to the point where government organizations are using them to lobby other parts of government. We've seen this in the hospital business; we've seen it in the Ontario lottery and gaming business, where they have hired consultants to lobby government; we have seen it in municipalities; and we have seen it, of course, with great excess in the eHealth situation. We have seen this government, through regulations or the non-regulations, attack agriculture in many and various ways, particularly in the fruit wine area, where once they promised to have it, and then they took it away. The safety net program, the microFIT program—it goes on and on.

We look forward to reviewing this act and we look forward to it being of a positive nature to Ontario. However, we do have some doubts.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is a pleasure today to speak on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to celebrate our teachers on World Teachers' Day. First recognized by UNESCO in 1994, World Teachers' Day provides us with an opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to our teachers and the integral role they play in the lives of almost two million students throughout the province. The UNESCO theme for this year is, "Recovery Begins with Teachers." Here in Canada, our teachers are supporting this theme with a national statement: "Canadian Teachers—Doing it Right!"

As Canadians and as Ontarians, we have much to thank our teachers for in doing it right. They tirelessly support our students and are committed to our students at every stage of their journey towards achieving personal success and their full potential. They act as role models,

leaders and mentors. We all can recall teachers who have had a tremendous, positive impact on our lives.

Throughout this past year, many teachers have received awards for their outstanding accomplishments, and I'd like to take this opportunity to just recognize three who I think are representative of all teachers: Alice Désormeaux, Colleen Drew-Baehre and Matthew Biggley. They are the respective recipients of this year's Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan award: an elementary teacher who makes teaching fun; a secondary teacher who connects students with the natural environment; and a beginning teacher who brings history to life. This is just a few of the examples and the types of teaching styles that we see in this province today.

We are extremely fortunate—our students are extremely fortunate—to have in this province so many outstanding, hard-working and dedicated teachers who motivate our students each and every day. On behalf of Tim Hudak and our caucus, let me thank you for your commitment, for your passion, for your professionalism, and thank you for all you do to help our students be the best that they can be.

ORGANIC WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses? The member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I would like to say to the Minister of Agriculture—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just call the members to order. Restart the clock, please. I want to ensure that the member from Toronto–Danforth has his full amount of time.

Member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

First, I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture for standing up today and giving the kind of announcement that she has, recognizing Organic Week. Organic foods are one of the fastest-growing sectors in Canada. In fact, I think a spotlight does need to be shone on this huge opportunity for us, economically and environmentally.

Some 85% of the organic food that is purchased here in Ontario is from outside of the province, so there's a huge market just waiting for Ontario growers and producers to fill. We need to take advantage of that opportunity. The announcement about Organic Week once again focuses in on that opportunity, and I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will take the opportunity at the cabinet table to push for greater investment.

There hasn't been the investment in organic foods and in organic food processing that we need. If we look at the United States, where there is approximately \$130 million a year that's provided for farmers to make the transition to organic food, we see a big investment. The European Union, about the same amount: \$130 million a year in research to develop the organic sector.

This government needs to look at the barriers that exist to organic production and dismantle those barriers.

The organic food council believes it's possible to double organic production by 2013 with proper government support. We should not miss out on that opportunity.

It was a good thing to make the announcement today. I hope a lot of people notice. I hope people come to the reception that's going to be held in the next few weeks, but I urge the minister to go beyond the announcement and to take action.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I also want to respond briefly to the Good Government Act that was announced by the Attorney General. It was much more like the house-keeping act, 2010. We will review the document that's been put forward and attend any technical briefing that's provided. On the face of it, when you go through the bill, it's largely technical amendments. It's quite something to get a bill with a title as grand as the Good Government Act and then find, essentially, all the odds and ends that need to be sorted out on a variety of bills sort of swept together.

I'm sure there are others who will be very creative in spinning a story around that act. I look forward to those acts of imagination and rhetoric.

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats join the government and the Conservative Party in recognizing and honouring elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers and education workers in general who work in our school system.

This is one of those rare occasions where three political parties agree, at least in recognizing and honouring our teachers. I want to say, though, that we do diverge from time to time in our opinions about the work they do because, I have to tell you, teachers do a very difficult job. They are counsellors, they are therapists, they're policemen and, on occasion, they are substitute parents. They do all that day in and day out. It's a complex job.

They are doing more than ever before. They've got bigger class sizes than ever before from grades 4 to 8—30 students and/or more. They've got split classes that they have never seen before, more and more split classes than I have ever seen as a former teacher, making the life of elementary teachers, in particular, difficult. Regular teachers are doing ESL, which they didn't do before but are doing more and more of. They've got regular teachers teaching special education for which they are not qualified, meaning that a whole lot of kids with special needs are falling through the cracks. And now, as a result of full-time SK and JK, which I support, they're going to be teaching kids in averages of more than 29 students. That's a lot of students to be teaching in a JK or SK class, but that's the job of teachers, and they do it. They do it even though it's getting harder and harder.

1550

We honour them today and we recognize their work, which is important to the lives of the two million kids, and we have three parties saying the same thing on this rare occasion. It's nice.

PETITIONS

PENETANGUISHENE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have over 1,000 petitions here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Penetanguishene Secondary School is an important part of the community of Penetanguishene and surrounding area; and

"Whereas Penetanguishene is a small town within the greater Golden Horseshoe which meets the definition of a complete community, as set out in the Places to Grow Act; and

"Whereas Penetanguishene is a unique multicultural community that is reflected in the educational programming at Penetanguishene Secondary School (French and native studies); and

"Whereas research indicates that the success of teenagers in school is directly linked to a positive relationship with school staff and said relationships are fostered in small, community-based schools (400 to 800 students) that reflect the values of the community and serve the needs of the local community; and

"Whereas research also supports the continuation of small schools such as Penetanguishene Secondary School ... that experience increased attendance and lower dropout rates; increased student participation in school, community and extra-curricular activities; lower incidence of behavioural problems and vandalism; and provide a more positive learning environment for students in the lowest socio-economic backgrounds than in larger schools; and

"Whereas the accommodations review committee for north Simcoe recommended to the Simcoe County District School Board the continuation of Penetanguishene Secondary School; and

"Whereas it is the policy of the Simcoe County District School Board that its facilities will be made available for community, use for the mutual benefit of students and the community; and

"Whereas Penetanguishene Secondary School is currently at 85% capacity, which can accommodate the growing community of Penetanguishene as well as support the board-mandated community partnerships to provide educational and employment opportunities for local students such as shared-use facilities and co-operative educational placements; and

"Whereas the absence of a secondary school in Penetanguishene would negatively affect the lives of the students and their parents, increase the use of fossil fuels

and greenhouse gases through the busing of students to another town, and negatively affect future opportunities for growth in the community and in the business sector of Penetanguishene; and

"Whereas within the past three ... years the Simcoe County District School Board has spent in excess of \$4 million on upgrades to Penetanguishene Secondary School's exterior, general classrooms and to make the building more accessible and energy-efficient;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Penetanguishene and flow funding to the local school board so that Penetanguishene Secondary School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Penetanguishene and surrounding area."

I agree with this petition and I will be happy to sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition certified by the Clerk, pursuant to standing order 39(c). It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Kleeson"—it should be Klees. It's amazing; I suspect his office distributed these—"on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support the petition and I've endorsed it as required.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States" of America.

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Lathiha.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition on behalf of those suffering from multiple sclerosis in the province of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government agree to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment, also known as liberation therapy, to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I will certainly sign this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I would like to take this opportunity to thank Doreen and Norman MacNicoll from Athens for sending me this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Leeds-Grenville do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with Brigid.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Stu Hubble of 1609 Champlain Drive in Peterborough, Ontario, for forwarding this petition to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Emily.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition and I shall read it.

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and lifesaving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities;

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and

the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment."

I support this petition.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank Douglas, Arlene, Matthew, Craig, Jason, Kellie and Terry-Ann Hare, and also Sandy Morin, for providing me with this petition. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis; and

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Nick.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This is a petition to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding funding and approval for CCSVI diagnosis and treatment.

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US; the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people with MS" will "have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this petition to me.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Mr. Speaker, I have it signed, but I don't have it stamped. I'm sure they will; it's the same as yesterday's. I'm sorry I didn't have time to do that.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

"Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

I have signed this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 4, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments.

I have about 20 minutes allotted to me to speak about the context under which the Ontario energy and property tax credit is being introduced, how it is part of the broader tax reform package that was introduced by the government in the budget of 2009 and what it really means in terms of the kinds of issue which we have all been discussing—one that is a real issue around energy prices, how it will help our families to mitigate those costs, but also what the different facets are. I know the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, had spoken quite in depth and at length about the different facets of this particular tax credit, but think it's worth noting again from a different point of view and in a different light.

The 2009 budget, I think we all know, came in very different circumstances to what we had been used to in some years in Ontario. Around the spring of 2009, the province, but not only the province, the country—in fact, most of the world and all the major economies in the world were in the midst of one of the biggest, most severe recessions we have lived through in many long years. Now, as we are coming towards the tail end of that recession and recovery has begun, we are starting to see a lot of economic analysis that is coming out in regard to that recession we lived through. One of the things which really jumps out is the reference to that recession and the reference being made by all leading experts that it was a great recession. The magnitude of that recession was comparable to what took place roughly 80 years ago, an episode in our economic history or political history that we refer to as the Great Depression. So this recession was extremely significant. We are still seeing the impact, and the impact has been that there has been no economy provincially that has not been impacted by this recession. Our federal government has taken a serious, serious impact because of the recession.

We don't need to look just at Canada. If you look at the United States and their economy and the challenges they are going through, and especially Europe and the challenges they're going through—Spain, Portugal, Greece—all these economies with a really strong infrastructure are going through significant upheaval at the moment. I was watching a program about Spain, what's going on and the kinds of measures the government is bringing in to get the economy moving again. They were talking about an unemployment rate of 20% in Spain. That is incredible.

In Canada and in Ontario, we actually have fared quite well, relatively speaking, compared to what's happening in the United States and in Europe. We're looking at an unemployment rate of roughly 8%. But that doesn't take away from the argument that there is a significant movement, a significant change that has taken place in the way our economies have operated. After many, many years of prosperous economic times, there has been a huge change, a huge correction in our economic system. It is the role of government, not only the provincial government here in Ontario but all governments, obviously to respond to that economic reality, to make sure that we put in place rules and regulations and infrastructure that meet the needs of the 21st-century economy. There's no better time than a decade in and starting the second decade of the 21st century to put together those specific measures. And that was the genesis, perhaps, of the nature of the 2009 budget, which has been debated in this Legislature many, many times.

There were three elements of that budget, and I guess the overarching theme of that budget was to reform and modernize our tax system.

1610

There are three types of taxes we all pay: There is the consumption tax that we pay, which, before July 1, was the 5% GST and 8% provincial sales tax, PST; there are

the personal income taxes that we all pay; and then there are the corporate taxes that our businesses pay. What that budget, the budget of 2009, did was to reform, to look at all those three types of taxes, not just one of them but all three taxes—the consumption tax, the personal income tax and the corporate income tax—and modernize them, reform them in a manner that they actually meet the needs of a 21st-century economy in the province of Ontario. That was a significant step, and it's something that was noticed, obviously, because we've talked about it not only in this Legislature but in our communities as well, but it was also analyzed, scrutinized and lauded by many of the experts out there.

Obviously, one of the most controversial parts of that tax reform was the harmonization of the GST and the PST, which is the combining of the 5% GST and 8% PST. But the reason for that harmonization or that combination was to create a truly value-added tax in the province of Ontario, because up to July 1, 2010, the provincial sales tax was not a value-added tax; it was a manufacturing tax, which basically put tax on tax on tax on our businesses that were producing things in Ontario and selling them, be it goods or services. Every economist has looked at it and said that that is the way to go. And we are not the only ones; we are actually catching up. We know that economies in Asia and Europe have been introducing value-added taxes. The federal government did so back in the late 1980s or early 1990s when the GST came into place.

But that's where we did not stop. We went further ahead and looked at personal income taxes and made sure that we reduced personal income taxes. As a result of what we did, as we all know, is a reduced personal income tax on the first income tax bracket, which is the first \$37,000 that we make. We reduced it to the point where it is the lowest anywhere in Canada—again, a very significant step to ensure that especially those who are on low-income salaries, mid-income families and seniors on fixed incomes pay less taxes in the province of Ontario.

Also, we reduced corporate income taxes very significantly, both for small businesses, because they are the economic engine in our province, but also for large businesses to ensure that they have a competitive advantage in place.

Along with the personal income taxes, the government also introduced certain targeted tax credits to help those low-income families, mid-income families and seniors on fixed incomes so that they can take the maximum advantage of the income tax changes.

The two most important tax credits—one was the sales tax credit that came into place earlier in the year, which gives up to \$260 for those who are low-income, mid-income families and seniors on fixed incomes. It's something like, obviously, a GST credit, but is on top of that. We also introduced an energy and property tax credit, the subject of Bill 109, which we are discussing now.

Here's an interesting thing that has been talked about and written about—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Point of order, Speaker: quorum call.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. You may continue.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I wanted a little break. I saw the honourable member from Thornhill having certain conversations and—

Mr. Peter Shurman: We were talking about how interesting your speech was.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I noticed how you left the room because it was that interesting.

Anyway, going back to the point I was talking about, which was around tax credits and how they are important in a modern economy: A lot of literature I've looked at talks about that you have a value-added tax, consumption tax system because it allows for having a more modern sales tax system and helps bring the prices of goods and services down because businesses, under a value-added tax system, don't pay taxes on inputs, and that's less cost to produce those particular things.

You also bring down personal income taxes, of course, to help a broader set of the population. But in order to have a really lasting impact on targeted groups—that is, groups that are low income, which we want to make sure have the most tax benefit, groups like seniors on fixed incomes—one introduces tax credits, and that's exactly what we are doing.

It was interesting to look at the study which was done by the centre for policy alternatives, which is entitled "Not a Tax Grab After All." One of the things they outlined when they looked at our very broad tax reform package that included HST, personal income tax cuts and corporate income tax cuts—if I may quote a small passage: "From a tax fairness perspective, it would have been preferable if the offsets had been weighted more heavily towards tax credits, with their more progressive impact. Devoting more resources to the sales and property tax credits (which are steeply progressive) and less to the generalized personal income tax reductions (in which the benefits increase as income rises) would have strengthened the overall progressive aspects of the program and de-emphasized those measures that disproportionately benefit the rich." It further goes on to say, "The design of the property and sales tax credits is far better, being targeted to lower-income taxpayers."

It's very, I think, on point to say that having tax credits like the sales tax credit or the Ontario energy and property tax credit or the children's activity tax credit, which was introduced and is being debated through the

Legislature, really allows us, in a very progressive manner, to help in a targeted fashion those who need the help most. That is exactly what we are doing through the Ontario energy and property tax credit.

I think the context is even more important now as we've been debating and seeing that there has been a rise in the cost of energy, something, I think, we all have been hearing in our constituencies. Families, especially seniors, are feeling an additional impact of these higher prices. I think we know the reason. We have made a lot of investment to ensure that we have upgraded a very dirty, unpredictable, unreliable energy system which was inherited from the previous government, where little, if any, investment was made in our energy infrastructure. As a result, since 2003, the government has invested in about 5,000 kilometres of transmission upgrades, costing about \$3.6 billion; almost 8,000 megawatts of new supply online generation for Ontarians—the cost has been around \$8 billion, extremely significant; as well as other projects and, of course, investments in our renewable energy, which is not only making sure that we have a cleaner source of energy supply in our mix but also creating some good, long-lasting jobs in the province of Ontario.

What are the various elements of the Ontario energy and property tax credit? First of all, I think we should recognize that this tax credit is very much focused on seniors who live on fixed incomes and low-income families. I think that's an extremely important point, and I'll come back to that in a moment.

1620

This tax credit is extremely—I'm trying to determine the right word. The amount of money that's involved in this tax credit is significant. It's about \$1.3 billion in annual support, which we are providing to Ontarians through this Ontario energy tax credit. The threshold, as I was mentioning, is designed such that it is aimed towards seniors that are on fixed incomes and families earning low incomes.

I think it's best to talk about some examples to highlight the kinds of incomes we're talking about. You can talk about net incomes, adjusted incomes etc., and those who are listening to this right now probably will not get the real aim of how this will help our families and our seniors. So here are some examples. An individual who is a single senior and roughly makes about \$25,000 a year will, as a result of this new tax credit, if passed, receive \$811 per year. That's a very significant amount. This is somebody, let's say, who rents. A senior couple who roughly makes about \$35,000 a year, who owns a house and pays property taxes can receive up to \$795 a year in order to offset the cost of the energy or the property taxes they pay. A senior couple who makes roughly \$50,000 a year, owns property and pays a significant amount—let's say roughly \$4,000—in property taxes can receive up to \$625 in energy and property tax credits. A non-senior single mother with one child making roughly \$25,000 can get up to \$412. And a non-senior couple with no children can get up to \$260.

This is just to highlight the variety of different circumstances, family situations, that have been considered in this enhanced energy and property tax credit, which will allow for our seniors and our families to get a significant amount of money. Seniors can get up to \$1,025; non-seniors can get up to \$900.

There are a couple of other points in the limited time I have that I want to highlight. One, this tax credit, if passed, will be applicable retroactive to January 1, 2010—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Good point.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: That's a very important point. It covers all of the increases in hydro bills etc. we've been paying during this year. If passed, there will be compensation through this tax credit.

The first lump-sum payment, again, if this tax credit, this legislation, is passed, will come into force in May 2011, and from 2011 onwards, it will be paid on a quarterly basis. I think that's a very important point, because as we know and we've heard from many of our families—I've heard in this House that families, and seniors in particular, pay their bills on a monthly basis. So if there's going to be a meaningful way of helping them, it's to help them through ensuring that they get these tax credits paid on a regular basis. That's why, once this tax credit is passed, those payments will come quarterly from 2011 onwards.

The way this tax credit is designed and the income threshold that has been considered—two thirds of Ontario seniors will receive this credit and receive help from this credit. As I mentioned already, the value of this tax credit is \$1.3 billion, and because of the enhancement that has been made to everything that existed before, 50,000 more seniors will now be receiving some sort of help. This is a very important step to make sure that we continue to help our seniors who have worked hard, who live on fixed incomes, to ensure that they have real benefits accruing to them to offset any increase in hydro prices, the property tax they pay or their rent, for that matter.

I really hope that the members will support this legislation because it is meaningful. It will result in some real benefits for our seniors and for our low-income families, which will allow not only for the creation of a stronger economy through the tax reform package we have introduced, but also for helping our families.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Here we are, listening to all this stuff. We wouldn't need to be listening to this if you hadn't been ripping people off for the last seven years. You guys in this government over here have been ripping everybody off for seven years, and now you come up with this piddly little thing.

You know, you've got to make money to be able to get a tax rebate. If you don't have any money because you don't have a job—because you guys have taken all the jobs away from them—how are you going to get this tax credit?

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Madam Speaker, who has the floor? If they want to speak, I'm sure they'll get their two minutes to yell over there if they want.

I'm sitting here listening to this and I'm saying: Where have they been for seven years? Again, as I said, they've been ripping people off for seven years. If you want me to get into it, I have a whole list of things here. The biggest one you've just done is the HST. What a big rip-off that is to everybody in this country.

So now you come up with this piddly little bit, which I'm sure everybody will support in here. Why wouldn't you? It's a little bit you're giving back. But you've been ripping them off. Boy, you should have a whole lot of—and then you even spent \$20 billion last year that you didn't even have. Holy cow, guys. What kind of a government are you? I think it's time you take a rest and maybe just sort of leave this place so there's something left for other people to come to.

You go on about how you have to help these people out. Again, where have you been? They've been asking for your help ever since you guys got into government, and look at the kinds of things you've done. Deficit financing is just one of the worst things you could have ever done. And there's \$20 billion you lost last year. Holy cow, guys. What have you been doing? What about all this money we're paying—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: You know something? They want to talk, but they don't—I'm really impressed that you're even debating this, because normally you don't debate these bills. You just sit there and let us do all the talking.

But do you know something, Madam Speaker? We will support this, but it's just a little pittance that you're doing. You've been ripping people off for seven years.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm always filled with the evangelical fury of the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. We're going to miss him.

I listened carefully to the member from Ottawa Centre. He's an ambitious young Liberal member of this caucus; he's the president of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Mr. Peter Shurman: He's running for leader.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Shurman makes an observation.

He delivers the Liberal spin very well, and I give him credit for that. Quite frankly, the Premier's office trusts him in a way that they appear not to trust a whole lot of the colleagues of the member from Ottawa Centre. The Premier's office doesn't let the colleagues of the member from Ottawa Centre speak, but they permit the member for Ottawa Centre to speak, of course, because they can trust him with the party line, and that's fine.

For an ambitious young MPP like the member for Ottawa Centre, it shows that he's on his way and that some of the others who thought that they were lined up for positions of leadership had better realize that they're

has-beens, because this young man is about to clear a path right through them. The old line, "Don't stand in the doorway; don't block up the hall"—well, they'd better watch out, because the member from Ottawa Centre is going to clean house in short order.

Those who have invested years in their leadership aspirations should cash in their chips now, get what little they can out of it and perhaps prepare for their retirement. Young Mr. Naqvi will make a great leader of the third party.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening to my colleague from Ottawa Centre. My mother-in-law, who lives in his riding, on Parkdale Avenue, right next to Hintonburg, knows full well that he is a relentless MPP who is constantly helping people—Saturdays knocking on doors. He has been knocking on doors ever since he got elected.

I just want to correct the record here. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was totally wrong. This is a refundable tax credit. That means that if you make a certain amount of income as a senior, you will get it taken off your income. If you don't make any income, you can get a cheque and you get it back. That's even if you don't have any real income. The key is to fill out your income tax. That's why, at our office, we—and, I'm sure, the members who understand this—tell seniors that it's critically important to fill out your income tax. Then you're eligible for these tax credits that you can get whether you're a tenant or a homeowner.

On top of these tax credits, which are about \$1,000, based on your income, there's also a property tax grant of up to \$500, which is the maximum you can get, again, depending on income. There are many seniors who have received the \$500 grant plus the other \$1,000.

I know that the seniors in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence deeply appreciate this grant and credit system for modest-income senior couples or seniors who are by themselves. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound doesn't know, even for his own people, that this has been going on since 2003. Just think of all the people who have missed that in his riding because he hasn't told them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just in response to the member from Ottawa Centre, I don't think this bill does what he thinks it does. Our finance critic, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, has pointed out in debate that this bill replaces the property tax credit of \$900 that was announced in the 2010 budget and was retroactive for a year. Most non-seniors will still get \$900, but they'll get it in the form of \$700 for property tax and \$200 for electricity. So this is a reshuffle of the previous property tax credit.

By the way, when the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said you were ripping people off, yes—in the first budget, you cancelled Ernie Eves's seniors' tax credit,

which doubled the seniors' property tax credit at that time. For seven years, they haven't had the benefit of the increased property tax credits they would have had had we still been in office.

You brought in the HST, new hydro taxes, proposed eco taxes, the green energy bill, eHealth—over a billion dollars wasted there; unprecedented interest payments we're paying on our debt now. It took 23 Premiers 148 years to rack up the current debt we have in the province of Ontario, which is about \$140 billion, and Dalton has managed to double that. Our interest payments have gone from \$9 billion a year—they'll soon be \$16 billion a year.

If you go to daltonthehydrohiker.ca, a website that we've set up, it has a very simple calculator. Put in your monthly hydro bill now. It will then add all of his new hydro taxes alone. I know that mine, at home, is going to go up from \$100 to \$167 a month.

This new so-called seniors' and energy property tax credit will do nothing to help—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Ottawa Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his comments; the member from Welland for his endorsement; and the member from Eglinton-Lawrence—please let your mother-in-law know if I can be of any help, and she can contact me at any time in Ottawa—and the member from Simcoe-Grey for their comments.

I think there's one point which has to be made. Our seniors are very smart. Our seniors have worked extremely hard, and they have given a lot to our community to help build the kind of society we live in. I also know from speaking to our seniors that they all continue to think about their future. They know the value of having a good public health care system. They know the value of a good public education system for their grandchildren. They know the value of having a reliable, clean energy system for their grandchildren. And they are willing to make contributions to ensure that we live in a province with good public services available, not just to them but also to future generations.

We have to do our part to make sure that their quality of life continues to improve, that they have tools like the Ontario energy property tax credit and the sales tax credit available to them so that they can live in a comfortable fashion. That is our pledge to them. We will continue to serve our Ontario seniors to ensure that their lifestyle and health care needs are fully met.

I really hope that every single member in this House will support this tax credit and will ensure that our seniors receive the quality of life they so very much have earned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Let me start off by saying, in response to the very last statement of the member from Ottawa Centre, that I am quite certain that every member

in this House will support this bill, and the reason we'll support this bill is because, even if it is a pittance, it's something. It reminds us of the northern energy tax credit. Whatever comes along, we have to act on behalf of our constituents, and in this particular case, too, we will, but it doesn't mean we have to like it any more than it means it's going to help them.

The fact of the matter is—and I hope you will show me some indulgence, Speaker, the indulgence that you showed the member from Ottawa Centre in preaching over and over again the litany of the wonderful things he believes the Liberal Party has done, because I would like to go a little bit further afield as well.

But I'll start by saying that the energy policy, if indeed you can call it that, of the Liberal Party is an abject failure. Listing a number of millions of dollars that have been spent on renewal, on the infrastructure of the energy system and all the rest of it is business in the normal course. It doesn't make them special. An energy policy has to be a cohesive, coherent situation that can be explained easily to people—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And there's the energy minister, who is beginning to heckle already, because he knows he doesn't have an energy policy.

It's interesting that the member from Ottawa Centre referred in his remarks to Spain when he talked about the effects of the worldwide recession on various countries. Spain was the country from which the microFIT program that's in place in the province of Ontario under the Green Energy Act was borrowed, and most people who bother reading about what's happened to Spain—and even my friend from Ottawa Centre talks about the difficulties that they're having there—knows that the microFIT program hasn't been a success in Spain, and yet that's the one that was borrowed by the McGuinty government.

Taking a program and turning it into something that it was never supposed to be, in the name of the future—renewable energy, through the Green Energy Act, will help children and grandchildren that we produce in the future. Nobody can argue with the basic principle, but we certainly can argue with the how-to, and that's what the continual message is from this side. The continual message from that side is that if you don't vote for us, then you're necessarily against us, and that's not true. So I bring it back to the fact that we will vote for this, but we don't like it. We don't like it because it is a pittance when it comes to helping the very people that you single out as being the beneficiaries.

Your tax policy is equally a failure. On a number of occasions, after an initial solemn promise from Premier McGuinty that they would experience no tax hikes, Ontarians have had it basically, as the saying goes, up to here. Nobody can take it anymore.

When you take a look at people on an individual level, when you talk to individual families—and I don't care what party you come from—when you go into your ridings and meet people in the local Tim Hortons, or if you do door-to-door and talk to people about what their

problems are, what's the first thing that you hear? I know the answer to it, because I've done that, and I would hope that every member—NDP, Liberal and Progressive Conservative—has done that. What they're saying is, "I can't do it anymore. I haven't got any more money. I can't put my hand in my pocket anymore. You guys have got to help us." It is hypocrisy asking people—the Liberal government, I'm talking about—to make sacrifices. We just heard from the member from Ottawa Centre, we heard from many of you and we've heard from the Premier on multiple occasions that the times that we're in and the situation that arises from the economic downturn of the last couple of years require sacrifice. We all have to make sacrifices.

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I spoke briefly to a motion in this House for about five minutes last week, and I'm going to repeat some of what I said and expand upon it. Sacrifice is a very legitimate thing. There's not one of us, particularly—we're pretty well all of us parents in here; if we're not parents, we have a niece, a nephew, whatever, and we've made sacrifices. If we don't have relatives for whom we make sacrifices, we make them for people who are not as well off as we ourselves are. We give to charity, whatever it happens to be.

That's a sacrifice. It is not a sacrifice to continually expect people to put their hands in their pockets and hand over money to the government to administer on programs that it, in its own brand of wisdom, thinks are good for everybody, if the question becomes "How the hell am I going to pay the mortgage next month?" And that's really what it's about.

I think everybody cares about what happens to our world. I think everybody cares about whether there's enough energy. I think everybody cares about whether there's going to be clean air and clean water going forward. To characterize our party as not caring because we haven't voted for your lousy legislation is to characterize our party in a way that is absolutely not true. We favour all of those things; what we don't favour is the way that you introduce them.

Bill 109, which is what we're talking about today, Minister, will not bring the relief that's needed. It is too little and it's too late. This bill is a signal. It's a signal to anybody who knows how to watch what goes on in this place that the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty is struggling and that the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty is desperate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind you to refer to the Premier.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The government of Premier McGuinty is struggling and the government of Premier McGuinty is desperate. That's why we're seeing so many turnarounds. That's why we're seeing a constant effort to backtrack.

I've got a list in front of me of things—why are we talking, if all of this is happening? If people are so frustrated with taxes, why are we talking about time-of-use rates being held while we see what we can do to fix

the smart meters? Why are we looking at a microFIT program where Liberals told ground-mounted solar power producers that they'd pay 80 cents per kilowatt hour and then slashed it to 58 cents? Why are we seeing—I could go on for a while. Why are we seeing so many of these things? Because every time you wet your finger and put it up in the air to see which way the wind is blowing, you find it's coming from the wrong direction and you decide you're going to reverse yourself.

I'm going to give you an encapsulated view of how that government operates, and I'm going to make it relative to Bill 109. The finance minister comes out and sees a senior citizen drowning 40 feet from shore, and the Premier comes out and says, "I'm going to throw you a rope," and he throws a 30-foot rope. And then the finance minister comes back in here and says, "You see? The Premier has met you more than halfway." Humour, okay? But not so funny. The guy is still going to drown, and that's what's happening to our seniors.

There are a lot of ways to relieve the tax burden on seniors. There are a lot of ways to address energy costs. But what we're doing here is we're looking at a bill that will provide an average additional benefit of \$93 per year—\$93 per year in relief on average to a family that is constrained by income that has been, in the case of seniors, which is what we're talking about, hit by the downturn of the past couple of years generally—in a nest egg that was invested even in safe investments and hasn't come back for them because they had to dip into that nest egg to make ends meet during the bad times. And so you're going to give them \$93 per year.

Let me read into the record a couple of salient emails. These are emails that came to my office, but I know that they're parallel to emails that came to all of your offices.

This one reads: "I am a resident of Thornhill.... I have been reviewing my hydro rates and seen not a significant but an astronomical increase in my rates this year. Although our power consumption has been pretty much the same and in fact been lower in some months, our hydro bill has gone up by ... 96%!

"I am writing to you for the following reasons:

"(1) I want you to be aware of the significant increase in our hydro bill so as to bring the matter and its importance to your attention.

"(2) An increase of 96% cannot be condoned by any organization, especially the government. I recognize that hydro rates may need to be increased; however, an increase of this magnitude is not equitable or fair to any citizen of Ontario. My understanding from the utility (PowerStream) is that the increase is a direct result of rate increases that the government of Ontario approved"—and that's absolutely the case.

"(3) I would like to understand what you have done and intend to do going forward on this issue in trying to persuade the government to review the power rates so as to come up with a more reasonable increase as the current increases are not fair or affordable."

I say to the writer—whom I will not identify, but I'll simply say that if you live on Summerdale, I'm talking to

you—I'm not going to do anything except highlight this in this forum, as I'm doing right now by reading your letter and debating this government on a bill that we are going to have to pass, including our party, just to get you an average of \$93 per year. Is that not ridiculous? You will have your day in court, sir. You'll have it one year from tomorrow.

Another letter: "I had written to the Premier last July expressing my concern about the various increases coming together for the cost of electricity. As yet I don't have a smart meter, but my best guess is that it will add 20% as we are in our mid-70s and not inclined to get up at 2 a.m. to do the laundry or dishes and also not inclined to buy new clothes and dish washers with delayed start-up timers when our current appliances work just fine. The point of this note is to advise that today PowerStream sent us a letter increasing the monthly instalment from \$194 (which they set themselves from historic data) to \$378 per month for the next six months. Upon calling, I found some was catch-up but a significant portion was the inclusion of the HST and the 12.9% rate increase. I suppose part of this is helping fund the Premier's green agenda. I still don't understand how he will keep the Ohio/Pennsylvania power plant emissions at the border once his new plants are in place. Anyway, just thought you'd like to know I did send him a second letter on this issue but don't expect a response."

There are many, many more letters just like that. You can hold your hands up and you can yell at me, you can heckle, but the fact of the matter is, you get them too. This is a major issue. It's a major issue for a lot of people.

When we read letters like that, where we're looking at 100% or 100-plus per cent increases in the case of people like the ones I just read about, what are we going to tell them that \$93 a year, on average, is actually going to do? We're talking about \$1,000 a year here, and that's just power. That's before we get into anything else—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And that goes for you too.

Multiple hits taken by Thornhill families and seniors on hydro bills are what we're talking about here—multiple hits.

It's not about Bill 109 in particular. Bill 109 is simply another one of those 30-foot ropes, where the Premier says—and in this case, he hasn't even met them halfway. He's met people one twelfth of the way, because if you look at a \$1,000 increase over a year, what's 93 bucks? It's not even 10%.

The multiple hits include the 12% increase, referred to by the writer of one of those emails, that was put on everybody's electricity bill back in May; the 8% HST that was applied in July; \$53 million spread across all bills for the green energy fee; and smart meter increases from time-of-use rates.

Last week, we in the Conservative Party did an opposition day motion where we talked about smart meters. We talked about freezing the installation of smart meters until they worked and then providing an option on the

smart meters. What we got from the other side was what we expected—a negative on the motion—but we got a lot of rhetoric about how, because of the fact that we want a freeze and we want an option, we're against conservation somehow. How you can connect the dots and come up with that conclusion, I don't know, but that's what you did.

1650

I informed myself on time of use in other jurisdictions by taking a look at what everybody looks at these days: YouTube. I took a look at American jurisdictions, where power companies are sometimes privately owned. There is a variety of models for the business case in the States on supply of power and there are various ways of generating power—some clean, some cleaner, some not-so-clean.

Time of use is a problem there, too, and time of use is a problem because of the same phenomena we've discovered here. The meters themselves are probably functionally fine, but interfacing with the software that does the calculation at this point hasn't been perfected. So when our party comes forward and says, "We want you to stop installing smart meters or at least deactivate them for use, because even by the Premier's admission, things aren't right," you say we're against conservation—not so.

When we talk about an option, if the option is for a full-time meter that supposedly is going to allow people to buy power on a non-time-of-use basis at some differential rate, not at a discount, again you say that we're against conservation—nonsense. We're being mischaracterized, and I want to make that perfectly clear.

Ninety-three dollars a year is what you're offering.

I see I've got four minutes left. I want to refer—because this is not only about power conservation; this is also about property tax. Property tax for seniors is a major issue, and it was a major issue before we ever even got into what you like to call the downturn and what most people are calling the recession, which I don't believe we're really truly out of yet, but that's another story for another day.

The very first private member's bill that I personally chose to introduce in this Legislature was at the time known as Bill 78, the Property Tax Deferral Act, 2008. We were debating this even after the recession had begun, but before the Premier had uttered those famous words, "This, too, shall pass." My bill was an interesting bill because it deferred property tax—it didn't erase property tax—and it didn't have to cost the government of the province of Ontario one thin dime. As a matter of fact, there was a provision for a lien to be taken on the property so that the government could recoup, if it ever had to, and there was interest on the money charged to the account of the taxpayer, but the property tax could be deferred so long as the owner or the owner's spouse held the property, basically until you died. Then when the house was disposed of by the heirs, all of that money would be recouped, and the biggest deal: The people who lived in the house could retain that ability, could retain

ownership, could stay in the house. I had support from several people in this House, not least my friend the House leader for the NDP, Mr. Kormos. I was happy about that at the time.

It's something that's still worthy of consideration because what it does, at a time when the province of Ontario can ill afford to hand out money, is not put us in a position of having to support your poor excuse for legislation in Bill 109, to hand people back this pittance and say, "Look what we've done for you with our 30-foot rope." It puts us in a position of saying, "We'll give you a chance to keep your house. We'll give you a chance to keep your dignity. We'll give you a chance to keep your pride, and you don't have to give up anything."

Then, one day in the future that house that may be worth—who knows where you live?—\$400,000 or \$500,000—and the average house in Toronto these days is a million dollars—and you owe \$50,000 in income tax accrued for eight years or 10 years, so the heirs get \$950,000. The government of Ontario gets the same interest or better than it would get on the open markets on its money, and everybody is the better for it.

But, no, instead we see legislation like this, where this doesn't really help anybody. I remember, in the time when I was doing my research on that bill, going to see my local seniors' club, Thornhill Seniors Club—600 members; very active, vital seniors—and they told me, "This is a great bill." The reason is, that was not an association of seniors who lived in old folks' homes; that was not an association of seniors who were in long-term-care facilities. That was an association of seniors who only got together for one reason: to have social contact with other seniors. They're all in great shape. People are living longer. People are living better. They're a terrific group, and they choose to live in their homes. They deserve to live in their homes. They are on limited fixed incomes that have now been affected. So, we're going to tell people like that that 93 bucks a year is about what it is? To say it's not fair is the understatement of the year. The fact of the matter is, they deserve more dignity than that.

With that, I'd like to close and say I would hope that over time there will be some further consideration given. Although we will, as a party, support this bill, it is under duress, and for the same reason that we support bills that provide these pittances: because anything is better than nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think that was not only an incredibly important analysis of this bill, but of this government's style. It caused me, while I was listening carefully to the member for Thornhill, to reflect on the fact that this government's approach to these matters is very much the slot machine approach. It's the lottery approach. I'm going to talk to you about that in around 10 minutes' time when I get a chance to have the floor.

I'm so pleased that the government House leader has come back in, knowing that I'm going to be speaking.

Her interest in my comments always delights me. I have high regard for her as well, and I listen carefully. She doesn't get to speak as often as we do, of course, but I pay great attention when the government House leader speaks.

Look, the sad reality is that people are being hammered out there right now with electricity bills. Just wait. You heard the member from Kenora—Rainy River saying that the cold weather is already coming in up north. But down here in southern Ontario, just wait until December, January, February, when that furnace motor is running 90% of the time, when the cold winds are blowing, and when that brass monkey has lost all of its balls, when they're shattered across the deck of the ship—just wait for what happens with people's electricity bills. You ain't seen nothing yet.

In the summertime, people can open a window, put on a fan, put on a ceiling fan, as a surrogate for expensive air conditioning—and they have, and they've still been hammered. But I've got folks down where I come from—just like you've got folks everywhere in this province, every single member of this Legislature—who are sick to their stomach about the upcoming electricity and then natural gas and other heating and enhanced electricity bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Thornhill for his comments.

As is the pattern in here, of course, the opposition continues to minimize the effects of this particular credit. Also, as has been the pattern, what they are not doing is talking about the full breadth of all of the credits and income tax reductions that have been part of our total tax reform. They don't do that.

Yesterday, when I had my 20-minute opportunity to speak on this, I left a very basic sort of mathematical equation for the people in Ontario who follow the goings-on in this place to maybe jot down and try to remember and then see if at some point the members of the opposition want to try to assail that particular math. One of the other tax reforms that we brought in was a 1% reduction in your personal income tax on the first almost \$37,000 of income, so that means \$370 if you earn that. If you earn \$25,000, it means \$250. If you have a spouse or a partner in your home and you both earn \$37,000, that mean \$740 more in your pocket. If you had a hydro bill that was \$1,000, 8% is \$80 more that you have to spend as a result of the HST. Before you use up \$100 of the money we're giving you back, you have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously PST-exempt. You have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously tax-exempt from the PST before you use up \$100 of credits that we've given you back. As I just said, the one alone, the personal income tax reduction, gives you \$370 back if you earn \$37,000, or it gives you \$250 back if you earn \$25,000.

1700

I would ask the members opposite to talk about the full breadth of the tax reform that we've introduced in

this place since 2009, and maybe that rope will be longer than 30 feet.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to congratulate my colleague from Thornhill for an accurate presentation of what this bill does and what the tax hikes have been since Dalton McGuinty came into office.

We started in the 2003 campaign where Dalton McGuinty was on the TV and in our living rooms saying, "I won't hike your taxes," and then we had the largest single tax grab in the history of this province—the health premium. I know that when my mother was alive—she just passed away a year ago this week—it cost her \$700 a year as a retired school teacher. By the way, in their early budgets they cancelled the property tax credit that Ernie Eves had brought in. He had doubled the seniors' property tax credit from \$250 to \$500; that was cancelled.

You jacked up corporate and business taxes to the stratosphere. We were among the highest in North America. Only now are you reducing them because you realize you've killed the economy even beyond what the recession has done. You've killed the economy so that Ontario is a have-not province. We went from being the economic engine of Canada to behind every other province and territory in terms of growth. We're losing jobs by the thousands every week in this province, and you're doing nothing to address that.

Now you have the gall to say that this \$93 a year, which is the net benefit to seniors of the bill we're talking about right now—you're just repackaging the \$900 property tax credit they get now and you're calling it the energy and property tax credit. Of that, \$700 is for property taxes and \$200 is for energy taxes that you've brought in, to help cover them, but it's still the same \$900. The net benefit they get is about \$93 per year. Yet their average hydro bill—if you go to daltonthehydrohiker.ca and put in what your hydro bill is this month, you're going to find it goes up between 63% and 67% a year and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to add some comments to the member from Thornhill.

I just want to clarify something. The member stated that you have to have an income to claim the credit. You don't have to have an income. All you have to do is file income tax at the end of the year.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I didn't say that.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not here to argue the fact. I just wanted to clarify: You do not have to have an income. They can say whatever they want to say, but we have to justify.

I also want to talk about—the member from Thornhill says that \$1,000 is a pittance. Maybe in his circles it's a pittance. To the people in Northumberland—Quinte West it's a lot of money and they appreciate it. I'm sorry that not everybody is in his circle where \$1,000 is a pittance. I don't have \$1,000 in my pocket; it's not a pittance.

We talk about the \$1.3 billion in annual support to Ontarians. I'm not sure what—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's a lot of money.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's a lot of money—an increase of \$525 million. I just fail to understand.

Then they said when they were in government they didn't have to do all those things. Let me remind the member of the blackout. Let me remind the member about destroying Hydro One. That was under that government. They didn't do infrastructure.

Let me talk about a school in Port Hope that under their watch was full of mould. We built a brand new school. They let the school rot. It was full of mould; we had to build a new school.

They closed the hospital in Port Hope; we built a community health centre. That's how they governed. We think differently.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That was interesting. Thank you very much.

In no particular order—I wouldn't want to say of the member from Northumberland—Quinte West that he ever lets the facts get in the way, but the fact of the matter is, don't attribute to me anything, when you talk about a pittance, than what I said, and what I said was that \$93, on average, per year back in the pockets of seniors is a pittance when you take a look at what your party and its various organizations, boards and agencies have done to the power bills that are arriving at the homes of every single Ontarian. There are people—and we all know them, including you, sir—who are afraid to open that envelope every month, and those are the facts.

When it comes to my friend from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, he's doing what I would like to describe as Liberal math. We've heard the justification for most of the past year in here for the HST on the same basis, and that is that there's a quid pro quo: We're lowering the income tax, and we're bringing in this new and revolutionary tax, and it really more than balances out—until probably, oh, a week or two weeks, if my memory serves correctly, before the tax was implemented, when the Premier was actually forced to admit that, well, there was a bit of a differential and it wasn't necessarily in our favour. That's when we started to hear that word that we've heard again today in this Legislature, "sacrifice": We have to make sacrifices.

The only sacrifice that we in Ontario are being asked to make right now at the family table when we pay our bills is higher tax rates, net, so that we can pay down a deficit that that government created because that government doesn't understand priorities. And that will change on October 6, 2011.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. One of things people have got to understand is that there's nothing new here. There's been this property tax credit in the province of Ontario for a good chunk of time. I

suppose the fascinating thing is that this government, the McGuinty government, wants to somehow call this an energy and property tax credit. How the heck can it be an energy credit if it doesn't take into consideration the increases that people have in their energy bills? What it is is an acknowledgment on the part of the government that people's energy costs have skyrocketed.

Let me tell you what Sarah Thomson, Toronto mayoralty candidate, had to say. She said that in the 30 years he's been in politics, he's learned how to "manipulate, trick and pull the wool over" voters' eyes. Sarah Thomson, mayoralty candidate, said that in the 30 years that he's been in politics, he's learned how to "manipulate, trick and pull the wool over" voters' eyes.

Now, it's a good thing she's not talking about a member of the Legislature, or else me saying that would be unparliamentary. She's talking about George Smitherman, a former member of the Legislature.

So Sarah Thomson says that in the 30 years that George Smitherman's been in politics, he's learned how to "manipulate, trick and pull the wool over" voters' eyes.

If he's learned it, I suspect he's learned the largest part of it at the feet of Dalton McGuinty, Premier McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, because if there ever was an exercise in manipulation, tricking and pulling the wool over people's eyes, it's right here in Bill 109.

I take Sarah Thomson at her word. I take her at her word. Her call on Mr. Smitherman is probably bang on. I accept the fact that Furious George learned how to do it, and I suspect that he did most of that learning, while he was in the Liberal caucus and while he was Deputy Premier, at the feet of Premier McGuinty here in the province of Ontario.

The proof is in the pudding. Here we've got having the wool pulled over people's eyes. Here we've got people being tricked and manipulated.

A slot machine—and you can't call it a "one-armed bandit" anymore because those old one-armed bandits were mechanical. Mind you, they could be doctored, too, just like dice can be shaved. But these new, Premier McGuinty slot machines—the Liberal slot machines, the Liberal Internet gambling, the Liberal Poker Lotto—are devious devices.

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Let me explain to you why this is relevant. I've been reading some of the experts who have been testifying in some of the litigation, whose expert evidence has been accepted by the respective courts. One of them that I made reference to a week or so ago was a Dr. Robert Williams from Alberta, who studied slot machines, Premier McGuinty slot machines here in the province of Ontario. You see, these slot machines are designed to give the impression that a person is winning when in fact they're losing. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You put lots in, and they give a little bit back and they give a little bit more back, but

you've put more in. Are you starting to see the connection to Bill 109?

The slot machines in Premier McGuinty's Ontario, in his crooked casinos, are designed to take every last penny out of the player. They create the illusion of giving something back, but in fact all they do is Hoover every last nickel and dime out of that player's pocket.

So what do we have here? We've got the member from Thornhill, who painted a vivid, beautiful but scary picture. Help me with this, member from Thornhill. You had a senior drowning 50 feet out into the lake, and the Premier of Ontario throws him a lifeline, except it's only 30 feet long: manipulation, trickery and pulling the wool over people's eyes. That poor drowning senior has a brief moment of hope when he sees Premier McGuinty reeling like this with the rope and hauling it out, only to find that it's 20 feet short. And that senior starts sinking, knowing full well that that brief moment of hope given him or her by Premier McGuinty was the cruellest bit of trickery, the cruellest bit of manipulation that could ever be done to somebody.

We've got seniors drowning out there. I talk to them every weekend, and if I'm not talking to them, I'm talking to their kids. Those kids, a big chunk of them are baby boomers like some of us here in this chamber, those people born after the war. I was born in 1952, and my older brother was born in 1948. We baby boomers are getting close to being seniors ourselves. And people my age, by and large, either have very, very old parents or have lost their folks already. So you've got yet another generation now, people in their 35s, 40s and 45s, who are looking at their parents as seniors, drowning.

And they're not in very good shape themselves. You know, if they were industrial workers like down where I come from in Welland riding, 900 John Deere workers lost their jobs. And if they're farmers down there, maybe the ones who grew peaches, they lost their livelihoods when this government—the Premier McGuinty government, the Liberal government—allowed the St. Davids fruit processing plant to close. Those farmers—if you're down from Wainfleet, let's say, a beautiful little community in the riding of Welland, and you're growing cucumbers, you just had the rug pulled out from underneath you too, because the Bicks processing plant down Dunnville way just got shut down.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's pickled.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's not funny stuff; it's serious stuff. They're cruel, cruel games to play with desperate seniors.

You've heard the horror stories already. Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have been in this House on a daily basis, Monday through Thursday in question period, talking about real people in real communities, not talking statistics. Oh, we could if we wanted to. The statistics are not very impressive either. Why, in fact, a polling company called Angus Reid released some pretty damning statistics just a short while ago. Let's take a look; I'm sure I have them here. I know I kept them. I'll reach into this historic Queen's Park

MPP's desk. We've got 86% of Ontarians saying that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. Now, let's say there's a margin of error of 4% or 5%. That would take it down to 81% or it could take it up to 91%, because, you see, that margin of error works both ways. Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago.

And what are they talking about when they say that? We know what they're talking about. Don't try to trick, manipulate and pull the wool over people's eyes. It's not fair to those folks. Those folks worked too hard for too long, sacrificed too much, to be manipulated, tricked and to have the wool pulled over their eyes by Mr. McGuinty's Liberal government here at Queen's Park, the one that appears to have—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Premier McGuinty's—of course, Speaker. Premier McGuinty's government.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I asked you to withdraw.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw, yes.

Premier McGuinty might have the support of 24% of the electorate, because 76% of the electorate say they'd like to see another party in power.

I look across the aisle here and I see Liberals. I see the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan up there, desperate, because when 76% of Ontarians say they want another party in power, he up there in Thunder Bay is in real, deep trouble.

I look over there and I see the member for Oakville—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member not to comment on people who are or are not here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sorry, Speaker. It was you who said they're not here. I was saying they were here. I apologize. I'll not say they are here, then. I was trying to give them freebies. I was giving them the benefit of the doubt. But you're right: They're not here. But I'll not do that. So I want the record to be clear: When I said the member for Oakville was here, I was wrong, and when I said that the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan was here, I was wrong. The Speaker has pointed that out. I appreciate it.

So we talk to those folks, and when 86% say that life's harder now—it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago—what they're talking about is both the skyrocketing electricity prices and then, of course, Premier McGuinty's Liberal HST, his new sales tax.

Oh, my goodness. Somebody suggested earlier—some ambitious young Liberal—that a value-added tax was the flavour of the month. We've had provincial sales tax for a good chunk of time, and although I don't personally agree with provincial sales tax—it's a flat tax; it's not a progressive tax—I'd say that Ontarians had become acclimatized. But what rotted their socks, what jumped up and bit them square on the keister, was when the Premier McGuinty Liberals added tax to a whole variety

of things that had never been taxed by this province before. They adopted Brian Mulroney's tax scheme. That was popular, weren't it?

So, please. We know electricity prices have gone up and that they're going to continue to go up. We know that the spiking in electricity rates could mean electricity increases skyrocketing well over 50% or 60% of what they are now.

And then there's Mr. McGuinty's—Premier McGuinty's—HST. And what does this government do? They throw, as the member from Thornhill so colourfully put it, a 30-foot lifeline to a drowning citizen who is 50 feet out into the lake.

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By God, it seems that manipulation, trickery and pulling the wool over people's eyes isn't just a set of traits that George Smitherman, the former Deputy Premier, has; he seems to have it in common with a whole lot of his former colleagues right here at Queen's Park sitting in the government benches.

You heard the story last week about Sammy's variety down in Welland. I know the folks. They're a Lebanese family who came here fleeing the horror and the devastation of Beirut in Lebanon. They run just the tiniest little variety store at 211 King Street in the building that—our constituency office is sitting around the corner in the same building. Malcolm Allen, MP, the federal member, a New Democrat—his constituency office is there.

The place is so small you couldn't swing a cat in it. There's the coffee pot, there's stacks—because upstairs, at this—I'm sorry; it's not 211. We're at the corner of King and Division; 211 is down the road. It's 60 King Street. It's a small variety store and it caters to the folks who live in the building in the apartments upstairs—good people, various people who work in some of the offices and workplaces downtown, the few that are left. They will drop in at lunchtime or after work. You know what it's like running a variety store? You're talking 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. You're talking the crisis of shrinkage. Shrinkage is a polite word for theft. It happens. There are any number of reasons why it happens: sometimes just bad people, sometimes hungry people.

When a variety store owner like Sammy's—and I say, you swear that if you reached out like this—I've been in jail cells bigger than that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've been in smaller ones, too.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski notes.

You swear you could touch both walls like that. It's chock full of canned goods and bread and buns and the little counter. These folks work hard. Of course, there's a cooler to keep the beverages cool and the packaged meats that little variety stores like that sell. There's a freezer where the Popsicles and the Fudgsicles and the Freezies, or whatever the heck they are, are in. You can't turn that freezer off. Never mind during the day; you can't turn it off at night, either. It's got to run continuously. The cooler has got to run continuously or else that processed meat goes bad. Sammy's variety—he came right next door; he's right next door to the constituency office.

Look, he's ready to throw the towel in. His electricity bills now are over \$600, \$620 a month, and they're going higher.

As I say, it's a little—boom—wall to wall. You've got to sell a lot of cans of canned soup at a five-cents-a-can markup to pay for that. Customers won't tolerate jacking up the prices. Howard Hampton and I told that story last round, when we went to Celi and Presti down in Welland. The Ramundo family—I love them dearly. They're hard, hard, hard-working people. It's an Italian deli, one of the finest around. Prosciutto from Italy, capicollo, salamis; they make their own sausage; they make meatloaves. You see, they're freezing. They've got a walk-in freezer; they're a little bigger than Sammy's. They're not a variety store; it's an Italian deli. So they've got a walk-in freezer where they hang—because they buy their sides of beef and pork and lamb and rabbits, of course. Everybody goes there to get the spring lamb. The baccala—you don't have to put it in a freezer. It's dried, it's salted. You leave that outside. But you can't turn that freezer off. And the meat displays, the white enamelled meat displays with the glass in front: You can't turn those off because you've got meat in there. They've got the processed meat on one end, and then they've got their fresh meat on the other end.

And they handle great—this family is from Castropignano. I've told this Legislature before about the village of Castropignano. It's high in the mountains east of Naples: rich, rich people; poor, poor country. Almost half of the village of Castropignano emigrated to the Niagara region—the Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne area. Wonderful people—these people have taken care of me all my life—the Scapellatis; countless people. They handle Molisana pasta, and I've become a fan of Molisana because it's Castropignano pasta.

But you've got to sell a lot of bags of 99-cent macaroni on small markup because you're competing—these small business people are competing with the Zehrs and Sobeys and the big chain stores that can do loss leaders. You've got to sell a lot of 99-cent bags of linguini or fettuccine to pay a huge electricity bill, one that's climbing higher and higher and higher, and again, you can't raise the prices. These people are being hammered.

It's like that Johnny Cash song *How Deep Is the Water, Mama?*

Mr. John Yakabuski: How high is the water, Mama?

Mr. Peter Kormos: How high is the water, Mama? That's right. The water is getting higher and higher and higher. These folks are climbing, trying to keep their heads above water, but Premier McGuinty and this government are drowning them with increasing, skyrocketing electricity costs, drowning them with HST, drowning them with stupid meters that cost them \$1.5 billion—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Comments and questions?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to speak to this for a couple of minutes. I listened to my friend opposite, and he spoke at length, albeit in generalities; very colourful

generalities and entertaining generalities, but generalities nevertheless. Very little—in fact, I'd say it's not a question of very little. His comments, as interesting and as entertaining as they were—and it provides a certain relief at this time in the afternoon—were completely devoid of facts. Just for the record, here are some facts that we should keep in mind as we're working through this piece of legislation.

First, the Ontario energy property tax credit: What does it mean in terms of dollars? It's \$1.3 billion in annual support. That's an increase of \$525 million compared to the tax relief that was provided last year. That is a fact—fact. Another fact: The tax credit will mean that 740,000 Ontario seniors are going to see an increase in tax relief. Here's another fact: To target the relief to those who need it most, the tax credit will be income-tested. What does that mean? Ontarians who own or rent a home can receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to \$1,025 in tax relief. Here's another fact that's going to be helpful: The credit will be paid out in four quarterly lump sum payments so that Ontarians will have access to the money throughout the year at four points when they need it. Those are the facts, and I urge the listeners to the debate, don't be distracted by the colourful and entertaining language. Look at the facts of this tax credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I listened with great interest to the comments made by the member from Welland, as I always do, in this case with respect to the energy and property tax credit for seniors. I would really beg to differ with the member from Willowdale, who indicated that the comments made by the member from Welland were just talking in terms of generalities. In my view, I think he was spot on in terms of his analysis of this piece of legislation and called it slot machine legislation—I was listening very intently—that gives you the illusion that you're getting something back. But it's really a sleight of hand, and I think Ontario seniors know that. They're paying a lot of money out. They're getting a very little bit back in return.

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I think that that is going to tell the tale when we get to the next election, because in the meantime, seniors and everybody else in Ontario are going to see their energy rates going up and up, and as we get into winter, it's not going to be easy to ignore. Seniors are on fixed incomes. They're going to be hit a lot harder than some of the rest of us. They don't have the luxury of moving out, going out somewhere else during the day. They're at home. A lot of them have medical needs. A lot of them have specialized requirements that mean that they can't use some of the savings that are offered through the so-called smart meters. They're going to see their rates go up and up and up, and we need to make sure that the people of Ontario realize that.

But I don't think seniors are so easily fooled. I think this government is taking them for granted. I think that

seniors know what they're not getting out of this legislation.

The member also mentioned the 86% of Ontarians saying they're having more trouble making ends meet than they did two years ago. Certainly, that's what I hear in my riding. I get calls constantly from people saying, "Do something about this. We are drowning."

There are mounting increases in our cost of living, more and more levels of taxation, more and more things that we're being required to pay for. This has got to stop, and we need to make sure that we speak out on behalf of our vulnerable seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I was also very intently listening to the member from Welland. I hope he was running for the leadership of his party as well. I think that will be a great addition, nonetheless.

One very interesting point, which I keep hearing from other opposition parties, is their assault on smart meters, that somehow they are the cause of all the problems. I don't understand where their change of heart took place and their support for dumb meters circa 1950 comes from. Times have changed. Technology has come forward. We need to make sure that we have a smart grid in place. We need to make sure that our systems are more in line with the 21st century. These are the same political parties which I recall always favoured time-of-use pricing to ensure that we encourage conservation, that we create incentives in place for Ontarians so that they can shift, so they can change their behaviour in terms of how they use electricity. The only way we can do it is by ensuring that we upgrade our electricity, our energy infrastructure in this province.

All that stuff costs a lot of money. I don't think anybody at home will be fooled by the promises that are being made by the opposition parties, that somehow we can be the champions of the 21st century and not spend a single penny to do so. We need to upgrade our infrastructure. We need to make sure that the manner in which we are generating electricity and distributing it is done so in a 21st-century manner.

We're not doing so by using coal, which is a dirty form of creating energy. I find it very surprising now that even the NDP is somehow supportive of nuclear or coal as a mechanism to create electricity as opposed to using more renewable sources like wind and energy, which will result in cleaner air and less smog.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just in response to the member from Welland, our finance critic, the honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, points out the truth about this bill: that the net benefit to seniors—low-income seniors, at that—is \$93 year through this bill. It's not this billion dollars or whatever; it's \$93 a year.

Hydro bills alone are going up between 60%, and 67%. I went to daltonthehydrohiker.ca, which is a website that we put up. It has a wonderful calculator there,

and I put in the average price—a calculator that's confirmed by the experts in terms of it not being a gimmick. Go to the daltonthehydrohiker.ca website and put in your average monthly hydro bill. Mine goes up \$67 a month from \$100. That's a 67% increase.

All seniors will get—because this particular bill just replaces the \$900 property tax credit that was put in place in 2009. It only replaces that. It comes up with two fancy parts: \$700 for covering your taxes like HST and that—sorry, property tax. It doesn't even address the HST or the health premium or the myriad of other taxes, the 67% increase you're going to see on your hydro bill.

I think the most telling thing was the story in the weekend Toronto papers where a lady whose husband is on an oxygen machine—and the member for Whitby—Oshawa mentioned this: fixed costs. She can't turn her 84-year-old husband's oxygen machine off. Her hydro bill—this is not my story—for a two-month period went from \$450 to over \$950. She cried when she opened her bill last week, and her son is telling the story to the Toronto Sun newspaper. You should read that and you should be ashamed. It's a shocking story, what you're doing to seniors in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I read this fascinating quote attributed to Ed Koch while he was running for mayor of New York City in 1989. This is what he said: "If you agree with me on nine out of 12" issues, "vote for me. If you agree with me on 12 out of 12, see a psychiatrist."

Well, the people of Ontario don't agree with this Liberal government on any of their policies. It isn't a matter of nine out of 12; it's zero-zero.

I don't know if you've ever seen street hustlers playing three-card monte on a cardboard box down in Manhattan, down around 24th Street, the area where the Chelsea Hotel is, a great historic hotel. It was one of the areas where I noticed guys had set up their cardboard box. You've got to find the one-eyed jack. Inevitably, some sucker will come along and he'll win a fin, he'll win a fiver, and by God, he wins another, and by then he figures this is going pretty good. By God, by the time those guys are finished with you, those pockets—they're like rabbit ears. You just pull them out and it's like walking around with two white rabbit ears beside you.

This government is playing three-card monte with the people of Ontario, hard-working people who deserve far better, seniors who have worked hard all their lives and whose incomes are shrinking and whose costs are growing. This government, then, teases Ontarians with legislation that has titles like "energy tax credit," along with "property tax credit."

Sarah Thomson said it: "Manipulate, trick and pull the wool over" people's eyes. I'm not sure I would have voted for her, but she was sure right on that one, weren't she?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and speak on Bill 109, Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act.

I've been listening to the opposite party speaking for a long time. We've gotten used to it in this place: Whatever we propose, whatever we say, they always work against it and vote against it and talk against it.

I was listening to the member from Welland speaking about the candidate for mayor in one of the States: "If you agree with me a certain amount of times, vote for me, or if you don't agree at all, see a psychiatrist."

It's important to talk about those important issues concerning our seniors and low-income families across the province of Ontario.

Last Tuesday I had the privilege and honour to go to London to make this announcement on behalf of our government. We did that announcement in the seniors' activities place in the city of London with a group that's called Huff n' Puff. Those members, 55 years and older, get together on a regular basis to exercise and keep active. The majority of those members are seniors of this province who worked very hard in their lifetime to support this province, maintain our economy and create the wonderful stuff we enjoy today. So I think it's our obligation and duty, as elected officials who get the chance to govern in this province, to give people some kind of support and thank them for the hard work they did on behalf of all of us for many years in this province. That's why this announcement came about: to support them; to give them some kind of support; to make their lives a bit easier.

Everybody knows in this province and everybody knows in this country, and maybe around the globe, that every community, every province, every country faces economic hardship due to the collapse of the financial industry. Many different nations are trying to stimulate their economies, trying to do something to support their communities and to get back on the right track.

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What we did in this province is we worked very hard to invest money in many different elements of our economy to stimulate the economy and create more jobs, to be able to sustain our infrastructure, to be able to invest in our energy generation, to be able to continue to maintain what we have in health care, education and many other services in the province of Ontario. As a result of this hardship and the economic circumstances we face in the province of Ontario—we still maintain our ability to support our seniors and low-income families.

The announcement last week was an important announcement to support our seniors. We include more than 740,000 seniors in this province and we give them a chance to benefit from our tax credit, whether on property or energy, up to \$1,025 per year. I know it seems for some people not a lot, but it's a very important step toward supporting those seniors, as I mentioned, who worked hard to maintain their residences, their homes, and to be able to function like everybody else in the province of Ontario.

This announcement was important for the people who I talked to last week and continue to see on a regular basis, on a daily basis. They thank us for thinking of them. Despite our difficult economic time, they still have some kind of support. This announcement was more than \$525 million. The total announcements which were made from 2009 until now would be \$1.3 billion to support seniors and low-income families in the province of Ontario.

The member opposite from Welland said people don't believe us. I'm wondering why no government in the past 15 years invested any money in hydro generation and electrical generation. That's why, in order to keep the lights on in the province of Ontario, we've been forced to go back and find many different avenues, find different ways to reinvest in our generation to keep the lights on for the people of Ontario, especially for the seniors, who need it the most.

People talk about extra energy prices. No doubt about it. Many people complain in the province of Ontario about this stuff. Nobody wants to pay extra money. But as a matter of fact, in order to keep the lights on, we have to reinvest in generation, whether from hydro, wind or solar; from methane, thermal or gas. We have to foster all these avenues in order to maintain the lights we have in the province of Ontario. Madam Speaker, you probably remember in 2003 what happened in the province of Ontario when people lost their lights, lost their hydro for many days and many, many hours, and so many businesses lost a lot of money as a result of this loss of hydro.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was a problem in Ohio.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: And the member opposite mentions it was a problem in Ohio.

The problem was clear to all the people of this province because we never invested in that generation to update it because that generation was getting old and tired. We have to keep investing in that generation to keep the lights on, so that's what we're doing.

As a result of that, we have to reinvest. We have to buy new generation. We have to find a new way. That's why we implemented and passed the Green Energy Act to invite companies from across the planet to come to Ontario and invest in our generation. We have companies from Korea, from Canada, from everywhere, coming to Ontario to invest. As a result of that, we have created more than 50,000 jobs in many different areas, in many different cities. I think it's a good initiative. If you drive from here to Windsor, to the United States, you see a lot of windmills everywhere, and the focus on these windmills is to create more energy, to sustain the consumption we have in the province of Ontario for energy.

As a result of this investment, the price went up a little bit, and as a result of this investment and the price going up a little bit, we decided to go back to our seniors and low-income families to give them support.

This support is coming after many other initiatives came to support many different people across the province of Ontario, especially seniors. In 2009, in our budget, we announced individual tax relief to almost 93%

of the total population of the province, to give them the support they need, to give them some kind of tax relief in order to be able to observe our new initiative, modernization of taxation in Ontario. As a result, we were able to stimulate the economy to create more jobs, to attract more companies, more factories, more places to come to Ontario. And despite the hardship we face in the province, we came to invest in our kids. We invested in our kids, and our initiative, early childhood education, started this year with 45,000 students across this province. They are willing to go to school, to start to learn early, because we know the best investment is an investment in our kids to create a brighter, smarter and sustainable province.

We don't forget all our sectors, our economies, our people, our genders, our levels of age in this province. We invest in every segment of our society, because it's important for all of us to maintain the prosperity we have. I know the members opposite don't believe in this, because it's coming from this side, but we are working hard in consultations on a regular basis with many people who believe strongly in this province, because our obligation as a government and as elected officials is to find a way, always, to support our populations, to support the hard-working families, to give them the financial support they need, to give them a chance to put the lights on and keep the lights on and also to find a way to support their families.

I'm supporting Bill 109 because it is a good step in the right direction to support many people in the province of Ontario. Those numbers are estimated at 2.8 million people in this province, from low-income families to seniors. As I mentioned earlier, we have 740,000 seniors in Ontario who will benefit from this energy and property tax relief to support our seniors, who worked hard in province of Ontario. And do you know how much? It's \$525 million, in addition to what we invested in 2009. Altogether it comes to how much? It's over \$1.3 billion, and the opposite side is saying it's nothing—\$1.3 billion. It's a lot of money reinvested back in the community, reinvested in our seniors, reinvested in our hard-working families in the province of Ontario. So \$1,025 for every senior, who can claim on a yearly basis; almost \$900 can be claimed by families who are experiencing hardship.

It's a lot of money invested or reinvested in the community because we believe strongly that by reinvesting in our people, we're stimulating the economy. Reinvest in our communities—give them the chance to live with respect and dignity. That's why I'm standing up in my place and speaking in support of this initiative, and I hope that the members opposite, from the NDP and the Conservatives, stand up and join us to support this initiative, because it's good for seniors, good for hard-working families—100%.

After I listened to many speeches from the opposite side, I have a doubt that they're going to stand up and support us. It's a good initiative. I would invite the member from Welland and the member from the Conservative Party to join our team and vote in support—yes, 100%.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Say something nice about John Milloy and look like you mean it.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank also the Minister of Colleges, Universities and Training for his hard work to make sure that we have a lot of trainees in Ontario to keep serving the low-income people, keep serving the seniors and produce for us all the educated people who are going to carry the province for years to come.

All of us on this side work very hard to make sure that all segments of our society get looked after very well.

1750

Mr. John Yakabuski: I need to know: Are you working hard?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Always—always to support my constituents of London—Fanshawe, because my constituents believe strongly in our initiative.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about the seniors in London—Fanshawe? What about the hard-working families? What are you doing for them?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's very important to talk about the hard-working people of London—Fanshawe who get all the support in this bill. Every family—hard-working poor people can claim up to \$900 per year. I think this is very good stuff. Maybe it's not a lot for the opposite party, but for many different people, \$900 and \$1,025 is a lot of money.

I hope you will join us and support the hard-working families and support the seniors in the province of Ontario. I look forward to listening to the responses. Hopefully, they will say something good about what I said.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I was actually disappointed that the member from London—Fanshawe didn't keep going, because there had to be somebody in his riding who had not been recognized at this point.

But I do want to hearken back a little bit to the member for Welland and then the member for Willowdale, who responded to the member from Welland. He characterized the member from Welland's speech as being devoid of facts.

You know what? Real life is not a pretty picture sometimes, I say to the member from Willowdale. The facts that he talked about—the people he talked about in his speech are real people.

When he talked about the corner store owner being unable to shut that freezer down or shut those coolers down, those are facts. You can't shut those coolers down, or the food spoils. You can't shut the freezers down, or the food spoils. Those people who are working day and night and night and day and have put their lives into that business, they can't afford to let one little morsel of that food spoil because they're right up against it as it is. Their profit margins are so razor-thin that any spoilage, any loss at all, and they're over the edge.

I say to the member from Willowdale, take into consideration real people out there in the province of Ontario, seniors and otherwise, small business owners, working families that are struggling every minute of

every day to keep their heads above water in Premier McGuinty's Ontario. Let's not forget about them.

The facts will show you, I say to you folks over there, that this is a shell game. You're rolling one program into another one. People are getting a crumb from the master's table, and you're selling it as the panacea. It's not the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I do want to comment on the bloviation of the member for London—Fanshawe. But first I want to come to the defence of the member from Willowdale, who got a real scourging from my colleague here the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke—and not undeserved. You have to understand, I say to you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's got no choice.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have to say to you, when my folks down in Welland hear a Liberal implying that they're not real, when my folks down in Welland hear a parliamentary assistant in the McGuinty government saying that they're irrelevant and that their stories aren't factual, why, the Liberal support drops from 14% down to maybe 7%. So I let it speak for itself.

The folks that I talk about here in the Legislature know that they're real. Folks that I they talk about here at Queen's Park know that their stories are factual.

And, gosh, the parliamentary assistant has somehow had the cabinet door slammed in his face. We should be supportive of him. I want to see the member for Willowdale in cabinet where he belongs. I will continue to tout the member for Willowdale for cabinet until he gets in. I will continue to hector the Premier about the member for Willowdale until the Premier lets the member for Willowdale into cabinet. I will not rest until I've achieved that job. But in the meantime, the member for Willowdale has to understand that he may well have learned the same traits that George Smitherman acquired at the feet of the Premier, and that is trickery, manipulation and pulling the wool over people's eyes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: Speaker, I wanted to take a moment just to let you know that I will be talking about the speech that the member from London—Fanshawe gave. I want to point out something that obviously got missed and maybe still will get missed by the opposition, and that is, he was identifying the hard-working people of Ontario. He was saying that the people in his riding are going through a tough time and that the government of the day is acknowledging that.

He was also saying that it is his intention to support the bill that is going to be giving some relief from that. That is an acknowledgement that the system that existed previously was in disarray and that the energy costs were up and down like a yo-yo. There was no considered plan

by the previous government because of the privatization of the electric system. Now that we know that we have to invest, my suggestion is that the member from London-Fanshawe is suggesting that fair-minded people will take a look at what the condition was and is, and when they compare the two, they're going to say that at least there's now somewhere that we can get a concrete plan in place and a long-term goal to reach. It's going to take some money to do that and those costs are going to be borne—that the future holds bright for their children and grandchildren.

The member from London-Fanshawe has been making it quite clear that his intention is to work hard for—and he's always done that—the constituents of London-Fanshawe, to acknowledge that they are running through tough times. Advocacy for seniors, advocacy for those who are less fortunate and advocacy for those who need our help has been paramount for the member from London-Fanshawe not only in this place, but in caucus, in London-Fanshawe and across the province. He's well known for that advocacy. Those are the things that he said in his speech today.

It's rather interesting that they wanted to spend time on somebody else and some other comments and some other kinds of words that basically deflect the concept of what the member's speech was all about. The member deserves our credit and thanks for bringing the concerns of his constituency right here and explaining why he's going to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide some comments on the address from the member from London-Fanshawe regarding Bill 109.

I was at the announcement for Bill 109, and I've got to tell you, it was a wonderful, theatrical event. The Premier was impeccable. He takes off his jacket and rolls up his sleeves—

Mr. Robert Bailey: He loosens his tie.

Mr. Steve Clark: He loosened his tie, too; that's right.

He had the minister for seniors standing behind him smiling. All was well and wonderful in the world.

I just can't believe what I heard from the member from London-Fanshawe. He talked about constituents in his riding coming up to him, thanking him for thinking of them and for the fact that they're keeping the lights on. In my riding, you know what they're saying about you? "The lights are on but nobody's home." That's the problem with you guys: You don't understand.

I had my own little press conference on Friday, and that's when we launched daltonthehydrohiker.ca. It really told the story. I plugged in my monthly bill, and I couldn't believe that in the next five years my monthly bill is going to go up 44%. I was shocked. But people in this province know what you're doing. They've started to look at some of their bills and some of their household expenses, and what the HST is costing them, and what the eco fees cost them until the government did their

climbdown right after they announced it—a couple of weeks later. They're starting to add up their household expenses, and I tell you, they really know that with you people, the lights are on and no one's home. That's absolutely, positively what they know.

The Premier can do the photo ops with the minister, but the people of Ontario know, and on October 6, 2011, they're going to get their chance to—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from London-Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

1800

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank all the members who spoke and commented on my speech, not on other people's speeches. Anyway, I listened carefully to the comments by the member from Leeds-Grenville and the member from Brant, who commented on my speech.

It's very important to tell the people of Ontario that we recognize that they're facing difficult times. But it's very important to reinvest in our generation of hydro, of energy, because if we don't, we're not going to have the lights on—exactly what happened in 2003, when the Conservatives were in power. You know what happened. The people of Ontario lived in the dark for days. There were no lights for anyone; no electricity for companies and factories to keep their doors open.

That's what we're doing in the province of Ontario. We're recognizing the difficulties some people are facing, especially seniors, especially the hard-working poor people in the province of Ontario. That's why we have come up with a lot of initiatives, one of them this initiative to support people to live in their homes, to give them some kind of energy relief to be able to pay their bills. We know it's a difficult time for them and for us as a province—a difficult time for everyone on this planet.

But the most important thing is when government takes leadership, not ignoring the problem; facing it, not running away from it. This is leadership. That's why on this side, under Dalton McGuinty's leadership, we're facing difficult times by reinvesting in communities, by supporting our families, by supporting our seniors. We don't take anything lightly; we don't joke about those important things, as the member from Welland and a member of Conservative Party mentioned a few minutes ago. We take it seriously because it's important to us to support all the segments of our communities, from seniors to children to youth to adults to hard-working families. That's why we are in government and they are not.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Wellington—

Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment. This matter will be debated. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

The member has up to five minute to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yesterday I asked the Minister of the Environment a simple question. I asked only that he repeat in this House a statement he had already made some five months ago. This minister, while he was still the Minister of Revenue and endeavouring to sell the people of Ontario on the virtues of the HST, was evidently speaking to some of his constituents at a meeting in Mapleton township. Two community newspapers reported the minister's remarks: the Wellington Advertiser and the Drayton Community News in their May 21 editions. I have copies of both of these articles in my hands. They're easily accessible to anyone. The minister appeared to promise his constituents that if municipalities refused to sign off on the wind farm applications, the Ministry of the Environment would not approve those applications. I'll read from the article verbatim:

"One resident in the gallery asked point blank if there is anything the township could do to stop wind farms if the proponents have otherwise met all the government's criteria.

"Wilkinson replied companies must obtain the signature of the township for the application to be complete.

"If the application is not complete, the project will not proceed," he said."

Let's imagine the minister at this meeting. He is taking questions, and the mood of the room is decidedly heated. It was, of course, his government that imposed the Green Energy Act, and no doubt he voted for it. Under fire, his instinct is to try to shift the blame for the wind farms to the local municipal government, to imply that the local municipal government has a de facto veto over the project application, that they can stop it dead in its tracks simply by refusing to sign. I wonder what the municipal councillors present in that room were saying under their breath or through gritted teeth.

Anyone reading those articles in the Wellington Advertiser and the Drayton Community News would conclude that the minister was saying that municipalities had the power to stop wind farms. Now he's the Minister of the Environment. It is his ministry that approves the wind farm applications.

In his initial response to me on Monday, he failed—indeed, he was unwilling—to categorically repeat his response in question period, as I'd requested. Instead, he told this House that a wind farm "proponent must submit a complete application, and that includes a review and a consultation with the municipality."

To any reasonable person, that is very different from saying that municipalities could stop a wind farm application simply by refusing to sign it. Whereas the minister once suggested that municipalities have an effective veto

over new wind farm proposals, he is today speaking about proof of consultation.

The minister failed to address the obvious: What constitutes consultation as required for an application to be complete? Is it consultation or is it just information? And what if a democratically elected municipal council decides it doesn't want a wind farm in its community? The minister now appears to be suggesting that as long as that municipality is consulted, the application would still be complete. So which is it: what the minister said in May or what the minister is saying today?

Whatever the case, he validates my initial response as long ago as February 2009 during second reading debate. That's when I responded to the McGuinty government's so-called Green Energy Act, saying it should be more appropriately called the Power Grab Act. Communities know this.

Families are concerned about the health effects, particularly the long-term health effects, of living near wind farms. Perhaps in response to those concerns, the government asked the chief medical officer of health to report existing research on the issue. Yet the government itself has tacitly acknowledged that that report is insufficient because the Premier has, in addition to the chief medical officer's report, appointed a research chair to study health effects. In fact, he's spending public money, \$300,000 a year for five years, to support this second study by an internationally recognized scientist in the field of renewable energy.

The Minister of the Environment should know this because his ministry is providing the funding. And if the Premier genuinely believes that this study is necessary, surely he must therefore recognize the legitimacy of the health concerns.

So I want to return to my question about municipal consultation. Very simply, can a municipality reject a wind farm proposal or does this government plan to foist it upon them against their will? Do they have a veto, as the minister once suggested, or do they not have a veto? It's a simple question, and the people in my riding and across Ontario are demanding answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It really is a pleasure to rise today to expand a little bit on the provisions of the Green Energy Act for the edification of our colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills.

First of all, I'd like to say that the Green Energy Act is a great step forward for the people of Ontario. It means we can phase out dirty coal and promote cleaner, renewable energy like solar and wind in Ontario.

I think Gordon Miller, the Environmental Commissioner for Ontario, said it best, and I quote, "The ECO strongly supports both the vision and goals underpinning the" Green Energy Act "and views it as a bold and sincere attempt to recast energy policy in a positive direction."

As a physician, I know that coal kills people. I'd like to remind the member for Wellington-Halton Hills that

when his party was in government, emissions from coal increased 124% during their time in office. And of course we are eliminating it.

I'm very pleased that health professionals are also taking this view. Hilary de Veber from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment is quoted in the *Toronto Star*, September 23, 2010: "We need to close the coal plants now and make more room on the grid for healthier renewable energy sources, like wind and solar."

Our renewable energy approval keeps people's health top of mind while encouraging the development renewable energy. All wind project applicants are required to meet the same standards across the province, including a minimum noise setback of 550 metres for wind turbines.

This distance was set based on a precautionary principle because Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, has stated, "There are no direct links between wind turbines and adverse health impacts."

Our new renewable energy approval means we have a coordinated and improved approvals process, and certainty with respect to provincial standards. No longer will municipalities have to deal with the issue of setbacks themselves, which did in fact start to create a patchwork of setbacks across the province. The renewable energy approval is transparent and offers public review.

Specifically, if an applicant of a renewable energy project has a proposal, they must consult with local municipalities prior to applying for a renewable energy approval—which I think I'll now shorten to REA. Municipal consultation is mandatory for all projects requiring an REA, except for very small wind projects. Consultation with the municipality in which the facility would be located is required to take place at least 90 days before submitting an REA application.

The Ministry of the Environment provides applicants with a form that outlines what needs to be addressed with municipal officials. This must be submitted to the ministry as part of the application. The form requests municipal feedback on matters related to municipal services and infrastructure, such as the proposed road access; the rehabilitation of areas disturbed and/or municipal infrastructure damaged during construction; and emergency management procedures and safety protocols related to the ongoing management of the facility.

If the applicant is not able to provide all of the required information, the complete submission must explain why. In addition, the applicant must describe and document efforts to address any issues raised during municipal consultation.

I'll now quote a particular mayor who is clearly extremely enthusiastic about the Green Energy Act. Lynn Acre, mayor of Bayham—the municipality of Bayham is home to Erie Shores Wind Farm—said, "Our municipality has benefited so much from wind energy that it is now a part of our identity."

In the remaining few short seconds I have, I'd also like to point out that one of the great benefits of the Green Energy Act is of course the creation of jobs. Earlier today, one of our caucus members read out a list of the jobs related specifically to solar and wind projects in this province. It was absolutely astounding, the number of jobs we're creating. This act is good for the health of Ontarians and for our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1813.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
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Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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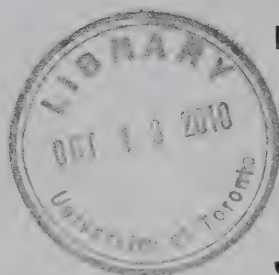
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 6 October 2010

Mercredi 6 octobre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO
ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT
FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO
FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO
POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE
ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS
À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 5, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak on this bill.

Now, this bill that we're talking about, Bill 109, is the second in a series of bills of what we call backtracking. It's an admission that the current tax-and-spend McGuinty government has hit the tax ceiling. Why do I say that? Because in the first bill—I believe it was Bill 99, where they sort of implemented the activity tax credit for youth—I think they were unfair because they did not extend the same courtesy of a tax break or a bit of a break for seniors.

This one here is another, unfortunately. I usually like to be positive on these bills that are trying to give some of the money back to the people they've taken it from. But when I look the detail in this bill, it's yet another shell game, to the extent that there's no change, really. The ultimate refund is still maxed out at \$900. What they've done is changed the names, not the amount; they've changed the names.

What this bill does is in fact provide a \$200 income-tested tax credit for seniors for the increased costs of energy. The increased costs of energy are the direct result of Premier McGuinty's policy on energy. We have heard from my constituents, and I'm going to put on the record today, out of respect for my constituents in the riding of Durham—seniors primarily, but not always; persons on fixed income; persons who are on medical equipment in their homes; persons who have updated their homes to modern geothermal systems who now find out it's costing them more because of time-of-use pricing. The pumps that drive the fluid in the geothermal systems are electric, and they have to go all the time to keep the fluid going through the system, so time of use really penalizes them.

Mr. Speaker—the Speaker in the chair has changed—it's hard to say. I'm trying to be as positive as I can possibly be, because we realize that Premier McGuinty is really saying, "Mea culpa; I'm sorry." This bill should be called the "taxes are too high; I'm sorry" bill. That's what it should be called. The bill is well intended, but it's an admission that they've made mistakes, the second admission in a couple of months. But they still haven't fixed—the sad part is that they've changed the wording.

I've got to put it on the record, and I'm going to read it directly. This bill that we're debating, Bill 109, "An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007"—that's their bill; that's their budget—"to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and make consequential amendments." "Amendments" means fixing errors—that's what it means—but what the bill does, in fact, is that previously the maximum claim for the Ontario property tax credit, OPTC, was \$900; this proposed amount is the same. It's so tragic. People, I hope you're listening. If you phone my constituency office, I'll send you the information so you'll know honestly; it's been done by an accountant. It's the same; it's \$900. What it's done is change the breakdown for an energy claim in the amount of \$200 and the property tax claim to be \$700. What a sham. I'm embarrassed, actually.

If they were putting new money into it, it would be borrowed money, because they already have a \$20-billion deficit. The borrowed money would be future taxes, so they still haven't learned. They have no plan. I'm so concerned about the economy of Ontario. Businesses will soon catch on to this, with their high energy costs. It is tragic.

The tragedy of all this is that they aren't being straight with the people of Ontario. Let's call it what it is: It's an apology, a mea culpa, for providing no plan for how they're going to deal with the high cost of electricity in

people's homes, especially seniors. Those are the people who defended our country and who have given us the great quality of life we have today, and now we're taking it away from them a dollar at a time.

Now, they say it's only a dollar a day. That's \$365, and to get \$365 in your pocket you have to make \$700 because of the tax rate. It's tragic. Some people are living on \$800 and \$900 a month. I know them personally in my riding, so I have to put their names on the record here—my constituents in the riding of Durham have given me permission to use their names. I speak to them and, more importantly, listen to them. The names in the emails are here, because this is sensitive.

One of the best and most intelligent constituents, who—I'm not saying he's a supporter of mine. That's not what—I would question; perhaps he isn't. But I do respect what he's saying.

0910

If you check my website, johnotoole.ca, you will see that I have a statement, my own personal statement and my position that I will represent my constituents, specifically seniors; what I stand for. So I would encourage you to look at that.

One of them is Peter Box and his wife, Christine.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, I am hearing some noise on the other side from the newer minister, Mr. Murray. I'd encourage him to take the time to respond, and I'll listen carefully to his observations.

He says to me here—this is Peter and Christine Box—"Sorry to keep bothering you on this subject but can you please explain in layman's terms what the government is now proposing in regard to help for seniors, and if it is more 'tax credits' how do people who don't pay taxes get to take advantage of it." In other words, if your income is below the threshold where you have to file—there's one example right there, and I know these people: intelligent, hard-working.

In another email, he goes on to show some of the treachery. I will leave it at that. He has a complete list of concerns here. In fact, he has 14 concerns. I'll just quickly go through them in my limited time. See, what's happened here is that they've limited the debate on this thing to the extent that I can't put all this on the record.

Here it goes on. This is Mr. Box, saying, "The higher the electricity bills the higher will be the HST."

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, no, it's true.

"When" time of use "was first brought to the public's attention it was on the basis of forcing/encouraging a shift in time use of electricity." I agree with that statement; I understand that statement. But let's tell the people that unless they shift, their price is going to double. Now, I'm telling you it's doubling.

Here's the bill that was sent by one of the high-paid bureaucrats at Hydro One, and this is what it is. Right here, it's clear that the time of use is an issue. It says that off-peak time—off-peak basically would be a good example; it would be from 9 at night until 7 in the mor-

ning—is 5.3 cents per kilowatt hour, plus all the other charges; mid-peak, which would be from 11 o'clock until about 5 o'clock, when nobody is home, is 8.0 cents per kilowatt hour; and on-peak is 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour. That's almost a 100% increase, so no wonder people are just struggling.

What they're telling seniors now is to do the laundry on Saturday because it's off-peak. If all of the seniors in the apartment building where Mr. Box lives lined up on Saturday, they'd spend their whole day waiting with their loonies and toonies in their hands to get the chance to use the washer and dryer on their floor in the apartment building. What a tragic kind of father-knows-best attitude toward life.

There's further information in this brochure, and I encourage people to read it. It's called *Introducing Time-of-Use Rates*. They probably sent this out to make sure that—I'm not sure how much they spent doing all this, but this brochure is worth looking at. It goes right up to showing you that if, for instance, you were drying your clothes, off-peak it's 12 cents per kilowatt hour, mid-peak is 18 cents a kilowatt hour and on-peak is 22 cents. It goes deeper, into air conditioning etc.

They've made it so complicated that you, the consumer, is to blame. When you say, "My bill is doubled," they're going to say, "Why don't you use the smart meter? Log on to your computer and shift your time of use. You aren't learning how to conserve. You're not a decent, respectful citizen. It's your fault." They've shifted the whole blame on this pricing, and now this bill is here, in its tokenistic way, trying to fix part of it. But they're not fixing it; they're not giving one new cent. They're taking \$200 out of one pot and putting it into the other pot. It's a case in this—I have to slow down, because I get so concerned. I do, in my riding, look at seniors and listen to them, and I feel that they're being left behind.

Later today, I'll be introducing a bill which is strengthening the Powers of Attorney Act for seniors. We've seen in articles in the *Star* how Premier McGuinty and his government haven't built, to any extent, any long-term-care beds, with the aging population. The year 2010 marks the first year that the baby boomers start turning 65. This is a silver tsunami coming at you. But what they have done—this is quite an artful game as well—is they're going to regulate retirement homes. Now, retirement homes are like fancy condos, basically; they're fancy condos. Basically, you pay—there's no government money; there's not one nickel in a retirement home from Premier McGuinty, yet they're going to regulate them. I'm not sure how they're going to regulate them. I guess they're going to hire more inspectors who make, probably, \$75,000 or \$80,000 a year to go around and visit all of these and give out tickets for some misdemeanour.

But I can tell you today what's actually happening. People in hospitals today who are there convalescing after an operation or surgery or something—they're high care and their rehabilitation needs are—they're still in the hospital; they're called alternative level of care, and they

take a lot more attention and cost more for the hospital. They're called bed blockers, too. They're moving these people, in some cases I know personally, into retirement homes, because there are no long-term-care beds available. You have to wait for a year. Basically, you'll be dead by the time you find a bed. Or, as we heard the other day, you have to travel 500 miles. They had one where they were going to transfer the patient—the spouse is living in, say, Kenora, and they're going to send the other one to Rainy River, 500 kilometres away. It makes it easy for the family.

There isn't one ounce of compassion that I can sense for this particular group that is being abandoned at this time, in this economy, under this government—abandoned, from everything I read. Not just Bill 109; they were ignored in Bill 99, the activity tax credit one. They should have encouraged seniors to stay active by giving them a tax credit for tai chi or whatever activity—walking groups or whatever else. That is what I want to bring to the discussion here and to the Premier, respectfully: that you've got to do more than just tinker around with these technical tax things. Now seniors are going to have to take their income tax to an accountant and keep their little paper receipts for all the expenses and things, and the accountant is going to charge HST.

Look, this does not fix any problems, but it is an admission of guilt. It is a clear admission that they've gone off the rails. I don't know what's happened. The Premier, with all due respect, is actually a very decent person. It's not personal here. But he has lost focus. Somehow—I can't explain it—it seems out of character, this deliberate avoidance of the issue, that he has hit the tax ceiling. What's the problem? The revenue is down. We understand the economy is on its knees. It's almost the same thing—I was a councillor in Durham region in the 1990s, when Floyd Laughren came to visit us. He was the Treasurer of Ontario. He said, "Look, we have an expenditure problem. You're going to have to tighten your belts." He asked every municipality, under the expenditure reduction plan, to reduce spending, which was basically payroll: 85% of all public spending—around that; 75%—is payroll. He wanted the municipalities to lay people off. Well, they didn't want any part of that; they wanted to be able to blame Bob Rae for that. The point I'm making here is, they hit the tax ceiling and they had the social contract.

Well, I see an uncanny parallel to what's happening now. The public sector is well paid. The \$100,000 list started like this, and now it's this. It's hydro; it's hospitals. The hospital CEOs—\$500,000 a year, some of them. Unbelievable. Not even doctors—they have a master's degree. That's good; it means they understand a financial statement. The point is: paying the right people the right amount at the right time is important. We've hit the tax ceiling here, and this is more serious than Bill 109.

0920

I'm going to go through, here—Russell Branch is another gentleman I've spoken to in the riding on a number of occasions. He has written to me in his handwritten

notes—a very neat writer—"We try to conserve," but "we will have to pay for less usage" that they can't afford in the first place. He's got it right. What's going to happen is that the utilities, who get paid for selling electrons, are encouraging you to save and they want the revenue to stay the same. So you're going to use less and you're going to pay more. That's what is happening; there's no question of that.

We believe conservation is important; it would be the first principle. Give the people the tools: educate them; spend some time before you implement these policies. It's like the eco tax: They implemented it, and then they withdrew it. But they're going to re-implement it. It's a tax thing; it's revenue.

So, there's Russell. He's another person I think highly of for taking the time to handwrite, not text. He probably hasn't got a computer because he can't afford the electricity. Turn your computer off at night.

Here's another one from Bob Beamish. I'll just read some of it in the few minutes I have left here:

"Thank you for your email June 22, 2010, about charging HST on gasoline. The HST makes many goods and services more costly. However, I agree that the added 8% on the cost of gas will be one of the worst impacts (along with the HST on heating fuel and electricity)." He goes on to say—and he's got it; he's working on his budget, and he tells me all his personal stuff. Look, they've hit the tax ceiling, and this little tinkering around with \$200 coming from heating that used to be on the property tax is surely moving the deck chairs around on the Titanic. This is a serious problem.

I think, in conclusion here—I can't say this. I think they're going off the cliff, personally. Large companies that haven't the ability to turn it around—some of them are large, well-known companies who can't turn it around—go off the cliff. Nortel would be an example of a company that was lauded, was a premier stock and now is penniless. The government is roughly on the same trajectory. They have a spending problem. We're spending more, but at hospitals there are lineups; we have problems in the schools—bullying and everything else that's going on; we have lineups in the courts. My point is this: The whole system is in paralysis.

It isn't an individual—Minister Bradley is an excellent minister; not a problem. Here's the point: They, as a team, have lost their way—totally. We're seeing it in mental health, we're seeing it in children's services—across the board. For instance, in the seven years they've had of a glut of spending, now a glut of debt and a glut of tax policy that's crippling industry—it's troubling to the degree that I become quite worried for our collective future. We have to turn around and do the right thing for the right reasons at the right time.

Premier McGuinty is on the wrong track on almost every file. Look around. It's tragic, it's sorrowful and it's sad. I'm not saying this maliciously and politically; this is what my constituents are telling me. These are the real people who are first hurt because they have the least amount of discretionary income. Pay attention to what

Mr. Branch and the others are saying on this, because certainly you are close to the line here.

I'd like to mention Loren Pascoe as well, another constituent who gets in touch with me, sometimes angrily, I might say. They often think that we as members are government; they don't really pay attention to the politics of it all. But they're telling me that they're mad. They're mad as hell, and they're not going to take it any longer. That's what I'm hearing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to respond to my friend from Durham. Certainly, he brings to this House some of the comments of constituents that are echoed in my own riding and, I'm sure, echoed around the province. People simply are stretched to the maximum, especially those on fixed incomes. I hear from seniors. They can't afford the HST. They certainly can't afford the bump up in hydro rates. Their incomes have not gone up; in many cases, their incomes have gone down, and yet they're asked to pay more and more.

It would make a difference, I think, especially for those of us in the New Democratic Party, if we felt that the not-so-smart meters, for example, were actually delivering on the environmental file, but they're not. They're not. They're not delivering on the environmental file. They're not saving us environmentally. They're costing us, but they're not saving us. That's the reality of the not-so-smart meters.

This little stipend, this little bit that the government's giving back to seniors, represents what, about \$70 million? Seniors and others would be shocked to know that about \$240 million is going to public utilities profits. This was a deal engineered by the OEB. So they get back \$70 million, but \$240 million is going to increase the profits of public utilities due to a deal made, a deal objected to by just about every consumer advocacy group, including the manufacturers' association.

So really, this is not a gift. This is an attempt to paper over, literally paper over the egregious assault on our seniors, our small business owners—all of those in the province of Ontario who simply cannot afford to pay another cent in hydro and simply can't keep their lights on and do their laundry on the weekends, but have to work and live during the day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Durham was dealing with some of these property tax credit questions. Just to be clear, this program of property tax credits for seniors, based on income, as he said, has been going on since 2003. This is basically an enhancement of it. In other words, there will be more credits as a result of this latest change, and it is not nickels and dimes. It's an increase of \$525 million as a result—\$525 million for seniors, based on income.

I think the member from Durham raised a good question about income eligibility. Seniors who do not earn income—they don't pay taxes, in other words—can also

be eligible for it. It's a refundable tax credit, so if you don't have taxable income, the key thing—and I hope all the members here remind the seniors; I know in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence I always do—is that it's critical to fill out your income tax forms, because that's what triggers the eligibility. A lot of seniors don't get their forms done correctly and they miss out; they can miss out on up to \$1,000 if they don't fill out their tax forms.

Plus on top of this, there is another enhanced property tax grant, and that's been doubled from \$250 a year in a cheque, in a grant, to \$500. So you add the \$500 grant plus the over \$1,000 on the credit, and it could mean relief of up to \$1,500 for seniors of modest means, low income, on a pension.

So it is really helpful, and this is something that our seniors deserve because they've worked hard. They've saved, so let's help our seniors today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: This is another in the pattern of the way this government works. It's an ad hoc policy on the fly. It's an optic. Like I say, this is a pattern because there's never a plan; there's always a knee-jerk reaction to public opinion. There's never public opinion sought while policy is being made, but when there's an outcry after the policy is legislated, then this government acts. You know what? Seniors and people in Ontario on any income are smarter than this. They get that this is an optic.

Seniors and folks on disability, folks on lower income, are on a fixed income and they are hurting. Yes, there have been measures that try to help these folks. Previously, the maximum claim for the Ontario property tax credit was \$900. This proposal amounts to that same \$900, so we're counting the same \$900 again, with a breakdown for an energy claim to the amount of \$200 and a property tax claim to a maximum of \$700. It is apparent that the value of these claims has just been moved around, and you'd have to be a master's graduate from university to figure out how this is going to work, because the formula is complicated.

Do you know what? Energy costs are estimated to rise by 43% by the year 2015; that's over \$700 a year. This tax credit confirms that this is a clear admission of this policy being unaffordable. We need to support families and seniors, so any tax relief is good, and because of that, I will be supporting this policy.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm very pleased to speak in support of this bill and to respond to the member from Durham.

We know that energy costs are rising. With this in mind, our government has taken several positive steps that will deliver an energy system that will provide an abundant supply of clean electricity at an affordable rate. For years, energy consumers were not paying the true

cost of electricity, and we can see that on our hydro bills—mine shows that the debt retirement is \$5.07 for one month. As a result, our generation transmission capacity suffered with the lack of investment in the 1990s, and our electricity utilities were burdened with the debt that we are still paying off and will be for many more years. We've reduced that stranded debt, but we must continue to pay.

Our supply of electricity is greatly improved. The IESO recently stated, "We are in the best supply situation in a decade as a result of the new generation and transmission added over the past five years." That's the IESO's response. They were sitting on pins and needles in the 1990s and the early 2000's because we didn't have sufficient electricity. Although prices are rising, the result is that an abundance of clean renewable energy has been added to our supply mix, and we have created a new and thriving green economy. Witness the opening of the largest solar facility in the world, 80 megawatts, in Sarnia this past week.

Parallel with our efforts on the renewable front, we are actively pursuing conservation, which the experts tell us is the most economical way to meet our energy needs. The home energy retrofit program has been a tremendous success. It was a program that I took part in myself, and I reduced the energy bills in our home by about 20%. We are supporting Ontario's efforts to conserve more, and with a range of effective programs, we will continue to do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to make sure I acknowledge all the persons who took part: The member for Parkdale–High Park said that it's an assault on seniors. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, whom I have a lot of time for, does listen to seniors, I'm sure, but he recognizes that it's an income issue and we have to do something about it. I think we all do, in fairness, without trying to be belligerent. The member from Burlington: I think her comment was right on spot. She quoted some statistics that there would be a 43% increase in the cost of electricity by 2015—43%. Unless you're getting an increase in pay, then I think she is rightfully concerned as well.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans made some very valid comments—a little bit insensitive, though. He said that we have not been paying the true cost of electricity for too long. It sounded like, "Too bad; suck it up." That's kind of what it sounded like; I don't want to impugn motive. But he said he was at the solar farm, and I do commend the government. They are looking at options. But solar energy: 80 cents a kilowatt hour. That's a 500% increase. Get ready.

These are all good ideas, but listen to the sounds of the economy of Ontario. We aren't using much electricity. The IESO said that. Why? Because 60% of all energy is used by industry. Where are they? On their knees. Stelco is shutting down smelters. Listen to the music. Watch the

economy. We work for the people of Ontario, not for the bureaucracy. Let's listen to the poor and the young, and let's make sure we have the resources to do the right thing.

This is an example of a government that realizes, first, that they have hit the ceiling on taxes; they're trying to give them a break, and we'll likely support that. But slow it down. The next shoe to drop is the eco tax—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. There having been more than six and a half hours of debate on this bill, pursuant to standing order 47(c), the debate is deemed adjourned.

Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, we would not want to preclude the member from Trinity–Spadina from speaking on this, so we would gladly continue debate on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, you see the kinds of friends I've got? You see that? Some of them love it when I beat them up a little bit—gently, of course, and compassionately, as George Smitherman would say. Because George, in the elections for the mayoralty race, said that he's going to make compassionate cuts. Have you ever heard of that? "We're going to make cuts, but don't you worry. They're going to be compassionate. So as we flagellate you, don't you worry. We're doing it with love and compassion." It cracked me up when I heard that expression. I loved it.

Mr. Mike Colle: What does "flagellating" mean?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Whipping.

I just want to thank the House leader for her kindness, because I've got a few things to say. I, of course, support this bill, because any support that we can give to seniors is good; any relief that we can give them is good.

But why are we doing this? Why are the Liberals doing this? They're doing some nasty stuff here and there. That's why they, first of all, take, and then give a little. Take big and give a little. We oppose the HST for good reasons. We New Democrats believe that this is a regressive tax. It's about what we New Democrats here believe in: We believe it's a regressive tax. The Liberals think it's a great tax. They say that we are modernizing our tax system. What does it mean? It means that they're cutting corporate taxes, because they're so kind. Corporations, as you know, are in such debt that they need money. So the Liberals said, "Not a problem." Jim Bradley, the Minister of Housing is here. Minister—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind the member for Trinity–Spadina that we use the names of ridings or positions in the House.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—Jesus, you have so many titles. It's so difficult to remember all the different titles you've gotten—and you deserve them. But that's not the point. The point is that you guys are so generous to those who need no support. You've given five billion bucks to the corporations, because they come begging

every year: "Please give us a little more." The Liberals are so obliging. They say, "Yeah, okay, how much do you need?" We're giving \$2 billion away.

By the way, what's your deficit again?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's \$20 billion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's \$20 billion, you say?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Something like that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But that's okay; that's not a problem. Because if we give \$5 billion to the corporations, that will be good for us. Why? They're going to create jobs. Oh, really? We have been cutting corporate taxes for the last 15 years. Minister of Correctional Services—or community services.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Correctional Services—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Correctional Services—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And safety.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And safety as well.

We have been giving corporate taxes for the last 15 years, and where are we with employment? The same place we've ever been: 8% and higher. We give and nothing happens. Unemployment is still as high as ever. But when we give our money away to the corporations, someone has to pay. Seniors have got to pay. So to make them feel good, we give them a little something. Now, would I not support that? Of course I'm going to support it, because we've got to modernize our tax system, and in the process of modernizing our tax system, we are reducing income taxes to the tune of \$1.2 billion. Liberals are proud of that because it's modernizing.

And what is the deficit again?

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Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's \$20 billion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's \$20 billion, I see. But not to worry. We can handle \$1.2 billion less. It's not a problem because the deficit really is irrelevant.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's 15% in NDP Nova Scotia.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, mon ami. It's about having a deficit of \$20 billion and you're giving \$2 billion away every year to the corporate sector that some of us are going to have to make up for. You give \$1.2 billion for income taxes that you need. You need that money to reduce your deficit, and yet you call it modernizing our tax system. How brilliant is that? I love Liberal politics. It cracks me up each and every day in this place; it does. But you've got to talk about these things.

The harmonized sales tax is regressive—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry if I'm shouting at you, House leader. It's a regressive tax because when you tax some person who earns \$30,000 plus one cent and you tax somebody who is earning \$300,000, it's an 8% tax. They get whacked equally, except the guy at the top says, "That's not a problem; 8% is not a problem for me." And the person who is earning \$30,000 plus one cent is going to get whacked in a big way.

It's a regressive tax. That's why we progressives, unlike Liberals who have no Trudeaus left federally and—

Mr. Mike Colle: His son is there.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: His son is there. God bless him. I don't know that he sounds to me like a Trudeau-senior type, but God bless. We'll wait and see. There's time to grow. We have no Trudeaus left in this Liberal rump or that Liberal phalanx in front of me. No one left.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, mon ami, former NDP'er. No, this one is a New Democrat. We have been consistently thus for a long time.

It's a bad tax. You're going to rake the money in—because you need it. I understand that you need it. That's why I say to you, keep the corporate taxes. Don't give them the tax giveaway, don't do that, because you need the money to reduce your deficit. Don't do it.

When you implement this tax, it's going to be a whole lot of hurting to a whole lot of people. Andrea Horwath, our leader, quotes somebody from some part of Ontario every day who is hurting because of the hydro rates that are shooting through the roof. Every day there is another story. We want to alleviate that pain.

How do we do that? New Democrats said that we're going to eliminate the HST—take it out—on hydro; do not apply the HST on hydro. The savings would be 500 million bucks for millions of people, not just seniors, who need it, but millions of people who are hurting across Ontario.

We've got vulnerable people—not just seniors—living on the edge; people who live with uncertainty day in and day out; people who are not getting the increases in their salaries; people who are worried about losing their jobs. Think about this: 70% of the wealth is owned by 4% of the population in this country, and 96% share the rest of the wealth. That's 4% who own 70% of the wealth in this country. It tells you that a whole lot of people in between are hurting, and it's not just seniors. They're living on the edge. They're vulnerable.

We have lost middle-class jobs, good unionized jobs. We're losing them by the day. We've lost 400,000 jobs in the last four or five years—good-paying jobs. What we've got are part-time jobs more than ever now; people working at two part-time jobs on a regular basis to make ends meet. Some people are at a full-time job and working at a part-time job. We're not just talking about seniors. This is serious.

When I went to the press conference but a short week and a half ago, and the Premier was there, we thought, oh my God, they're responding quickly to the NDP proposal to take the HST out of hydro bills, because they said, "We're going to put in a proposal that's going to cost \$500 million and it's going to deal with these hydro issues." Lo and behold, we find that this is an announcement of a previous announcement, because this tax credit was something that was announced in the 2010 budget, and of course it's being implemented now. It adds some energy dollars to help those who have been whacked and are getting whacked day in and day out with a little something, and it's worth \$70 million. It will help some seniors, but we believe that it's got to be bigger than that. The Premier made me believe that he was going to spend

\$500 million just on the energy file, only to find out but a couple of days ago that it's only worth \$70 million.

People don't know what to do anymore. Every time there is an increase of any kind, people of low income in my riding come to complain. Whether it is an increase in gas or fuel or energy or property taxes or their assessment, every time there's an increase, they feel it. Why? Because their incomes are fixed. Their pensions, those who have them, are fixed. And many have no pension, no private pension except the CPP and old age security, and it doesn't cover the bills; it doesn't. So every time there's the slightest increase on any one of their bills they are worried, and they're right to be worried.

The government lauds and praises their smart meter plan, and we don't see the savings; New Democrats don't see the savings. Liberals are proud of installing so many of these so-called smart meters at a cost of \$1.5 billion. Imagine what you could do with that money by way of conserving energy, by way of other policies that would indeed conserve energy. But at what cost? It's \$1.5 billion that we end up paying for and that somebody profits from.

The differential between time of use, highest use and low use is so minuscule that there are so few little savings that they're not worthwhile. Why are you doing it? Why do you put that cost on to every taxpayer imaginable, every citizen imaginable, even when they can't afford it? It's just not right.

My friend from Parkdale-High Park was talking about the decision the Ontario Energy Board made but last year when they held a hearing to decide if there needed to be any change in what's called the return-on-equity rate; in other words, how much profit utility companies needed to secure financing. The independent experts said no change was needed, but the American experts brought in by the big utilities said that the profits should be higher and that Ontarians should pay more. Theirs was a victory, and it was a victory of \$240 million in new profits. It's a victory for them and it's a huge loss for the rest of us. It's a huge loss for the millions of people who are going to have to pay the extra cost to give those utilities that do not need the money the \$240 million in profit. I don't get it; I just don't understand it.

We find ourselves in an economy that has crippled so many of us—not an economy that collapsed because of the work that ordinary Canadians do on a daily basis; not because of them, but investors and bankers, particularly in the US and Europe and beyond. They collapsed the economy, and then we governments, we the public, end up having to dole out billions of dollars to prop them up. And then we prop them up and in the meantime, those same financial institutions rake in billions of dollars of profits in the space of one year, and all because of the generosity of governments.

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I love it when private corporations come crawling back to governments saying, "Please, we need your help," and as soon as they get back on their feet, they say, "Please, get off our backs." It's funny how that works.

You've got utilities saying, "We need more money," while you've got Ontario manufacturers and exporters saying, "Not a good idea," you've got the Consumers Council of Canada saying, "Not a good idea," and you've got the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, "Not a good idea." They all wanted interveners. That is, they all wanted to make their case, and they never got a chance to do it.

This bill, for what it is, is a nice little gesture to seniors. It would be frankly unthinkable that we wouldn't be supporting it, because they do need support, but it is an admission, in my frank view, that your policies are not working. In my view, it is your admission that what you're doing is hurting people and what you're trying to do is to help them as you're hurting them. I think the pain is bigger than the relief. It's a little opiate that they need to help them through this chronic pain that they're experiencing from these Liberal policies that are not helping them at all.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: But you'll support it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I already said. What am I going to do? Am I going to oppose this? Why would I do that? It was important for me to point out, however, how fundamentally I disagree with your policies. The HST was a bad, bad idea, endorsed by Tories at the federal level, where Liberals and Tories, federally and provincially, are tight with their policies.

Mon ami Monsieur Flaherty at the federal level was quite happy—I can say that, because he's at the federal level, right? Yes. He was quite happy to help the Premier out. He said, "Premier, if you need my help, we're just so glad to give it to you." It was beautiful. And the Prime Minister, he said to the Premier, "If you need my help, I'm happy to give it to you." And they together did it and it was beautiful, because the Premier, of course, gets all the blame, and the feds, who cut the GST by two points, losing as a result, of course, the \$10 billion a year that they so desperately need to get rid of their deficit—they too, by the way, are cutting corporate taxes and income taxes at the same time, and the GST to boot. God bless the Tories federally. They crack me up too, on a day-to-day basis.

It was beautiful because the Prime Minister could say, "No, it wasn't me; it was the Premier who did this." So the Premier takes the blame for "modernizing our tax system" and Monsieur Harper, the Prime Minister, gets away with murder. God bless him.

Anyway, I wanted to make a case against the HST. I wanted to state positively and with conviction that we believe as New Democrats that we've got to impose a permanent solution and we've got to give permanent relief to people who are feeling the pain on their energy bills. By eliminating the HST on hydro, we give them predictability and a long-lasting solution to some of their problems that they're having with respect to their bills. That's the kind of thing that we put forth that we believe is practical, concrete, and a long-lasting solution to some of the problems that every Ontarian is experiencing. Thank you, House leader, for the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always a privilege and an honour to rise in the House, especially after the comments by my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. As no other member does, he delivers his message with a very different flair, and it's very enjoyable to listen to him every time.

I think the Premier understands and he sees the needs that are there, especially with our seniors. That is why, at this particular time, the government came up with the energy and tax rebate.

I have to tell you that in my area, in which a majority are seniors and low income—one pension, if you will; as the member said, they don't have a private pension. Among the 740,000 people who will benefit if this bill will pass, many of them live in my area. I can't think of anyone saying that almost \$100 a month is not worth our doing it or giving it to them or approving this bill. I can tell you that almost \$100 a month would go a long way in assisting our seniors, especially those in need, low-income pensioners, with their grocery bills or in any other way.

So I'm saying to the House I'm glad to hear that there is support for the bill. I'm saying let's move it on. Let's give it to them as soon as we can, because they are feeling the pinch, and when times get tough, the seniors are the first ones to feel the pinch.

I hope that we can move it along and get some relief to our seniors as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess the member from Trinity-Spadina is always enthusiastic and entertaining, and often informative, and I commend him.

Now, he did say rather humorously that the alliance, if you will—his theatrics are an A-plus, actually—is a true alliance between Stephen Harper and Premier McGuinty. He does this quite often. What he doesn't realize is the proposal for this relationship is actually from the Premier himself; he initiated it.

What's missing here—that's a good analogy, though, and I commend him; I did listen. The thing is, Gordon Campbell in BC didn't put the tax on gas. He had other choices, a different schedule.

The fact is, though, really, what's happening here is Premier McGuinty went for the whole thing, everything: income tax, gym memberships, hockey registration. He got all the money he could—not any exemptions.

I think that, quite frankly, when I look at it, the federal government initiated an activity tax credit. Premier McGuinty copied it.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They're the ones who promoted the HST.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, actually, it was promoted by the Liberals federally. They're the same problem. They're addicted to your revenue.

People of Ontario, I put you on warning. Liberal governments—Quebec: Look at them. BC: Look at them; they're going to recall. And Ontario's in the same boat.

Pay attention. They have taken so much of your money now that they're warning you that they want all your money. They want you to do this, that and the other. No sushi. Eat apples. Brush your teeth. They're going to tell you when to wash your car and when to drive your car.

In fact, stay tuned: These guys are all about social engineering. That's what they're about—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Durham, please take your seat. The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Of course, it's always a delight to follow my friend from Trinity-Spadina. He's really the Lionel Barrymore of this place, or should I say the Robert De Niro of this place, so it's always a pleasure.

Let's name this bill for what it is, truly. Of course we're going to support it. It's like giving a baby aspirin to somebody who's having a massive coronary. It's not going to hurt; it might help a little, but the patient's still going to die.

That's what's happening in our ridings. We are hearing from people who are simply being swallowed up by this little cut, that little hurt, that dent. That's what's happening. This is not going to help. This is not going to even offset the bite from the HST, never mind anything else that has been assaulting them in the last seven years of Liberal rule in this province.

1000

What we in the New Democratic Party have suggested is something that actually could work, something that actually could really ameliorate the bite of the HST, and that is to take it off hydro. It's a very simple thing. It's over \$500 million instead of \$70 million. As my friend said, the \$70 million doesn't even come close, not even a third close, to helping pay for the increase in profits to the utilities. Come on. Why are we giving them more profits at a time when seniors can't pay their heating bills and hydro bills? Why is this?

This makes no sense. This is Liberal Ontario, where the big utilities and big corporations get what they ask for and the seniors, low-income people and people living on social assistance can't eat and pay the rent. This is the Liberal Ontario where the poor are poorer than even under Harris. That's sad, that's reality and that's today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to tell you, I nearly fell off my chair laughing when I heard a certain member in the official opposition make reference to the HST not being on fuel prices in British Columbia—especially after that particular individual has teased me about a federal report I wrote on carbon taxation, which recommended that provinces don't do carbon taxes. But no one in the opposition has read that. Does he not understand that there is a carbon tax in BC? I don't know what happened to Tory research, but they've been asleep at the switch. It's in the national newspaper. I guess the Conservatives are proposing a carbon tax now, because that, apparently, isn't taxation—the Tory carbon tax.

Then I love my friends in the New Democratic Party, who, in power, saw rents go up 27%. Have a little humility, please—just a little humility, not a lot.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You blew rent controls out of the water.

Last night, I was in the lowest-income part of my constituency at one of our accountability community planning meetings. Do you know what people were talking about? They were thrilled about this. They were thrilled that we've built more affordable housing in our constituency than in the last 50 years. They were thrilled with the support this government has given Dixon Hall. They were thrilled with the seniors' tax credit. They were thrilled with the personal income tax cuts they got. They were very, very pleased with the transitional funding.

Small business people, of which there are several who own small retail shops, get the HST, and that was the only person who raised it in a room of about 100 low-income people. I had two small shop owners. The only time the HST—he stood up and told everybody, including—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister, thank you.

The member for Trinity-Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All I can say is, I like the Minister of Innovation—that's it—but I hate the HST. I think the HST is bad policy. It really is. I think it's one of the worst things that we could do, and I don't think you could make a very bad tax idea progressive. It doesn't matter how you do it. It doesn't matter how Liberals present it. It doesn't matter how Tories, nationally, present it. It's a bad idea.

Liberals are moving to a user-fee system. They're going to tax services. That's how they're going to get the money. What it means is that people who are of modest incomes are going to get whacked. Those of us who have a higher income, and I include us, the rump included—we're well paid. We are well paid.

Mr. Mike Colle: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But we're well paid. And I think those of us who earn good dollars should pay a little more. That's what I think. I believe the HST is not going to hurt me as much as someone earning \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 a year. I'm going to be better off. And those who have higher incomes than I—a multitude of people in our provincial government earn \$500,000, \$700,000, \$1 million—are going to do even better. Those people don't even wink at the prospect of an HST, but a whole lot of people on low income, including seniors who get some tax relief, are going to be hurting and they're going to be hurting in perpetuity as a result of this HST. That's why I oppose it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Seniors have worked for many years building this province and building funds or pensions to support themselves in their senior years. I'm

pleased to stand here today to support Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments.

We made budget commitments to help Ontarians manage their home energy costs and property taxes, and an increase of another \$525 million will bring the total assistance to \$1.3 billion. With this bill we are increasing the earning threshold for eligibility, and this will mean that more seniors will qualify—a total of 740,000 in the province of Ontario. Ontarians who own or rent a home could receive up to \$900, and seniors could be eligible for \$1,025.

The income thresholds for seniors would be increased. The increases in Ontario energy and property tax credits under Bill 109 are in addition to several other actions taken by our government.

Seniors and most Ontarians, through the Ontario tax plan for jobs and growth, will benefit from parts of \$11.8-billion tax relief over three years. Part of that is a reduction in personal income tax of about 1% on the first \$37,000 in earnings, or about \$370 for the maximum reduction. These reductions started in January 2010 and were part of the major tax reform.

Through HST transition payments, single people received \$300 and couples and families received \$1,000. That's one third paid out. There will be further \$333 cheques in December and again in June 2011.

During the debate on this bill, the other parties criticized the energy mix, with the official opposition referring to all energy sources, except coal, as experiments. They also referred to the investments in transmission lines as experimental investments.

We know where they left us. They left the transmission and generating parts of electrical energy in Ontario in very poor condition. There was not enough supply to power our homes and businesses, which meant a risk of outages, brownouts and blackouts. On top of that, coal plants running on all cylinders were polluting our air and damaging our health, and we know what that does to asthma cases, for instance.

In a few short years, we have moved from a path of dirty coal generation to a future of clean energy. At the same time, we are creating jobs. Just to look at the jobs that we are creating—there was a list of them. Solar companies investing in Ontario: Everbrite, 1,200 jobs in Kingston; Solar Semiconductor, 200 jobs in Oakville; Canadian Solar, 500 high-tech jobs in Guelph; Oneworld Energy, 1,000 jobs in Welland; Fronius, 100 jobs in Mississauga; and Sustainable Energy Technologies, 300 jobs in Toronto. So we can see that the jobs that are predicted with the Green Energy Act are certainly occurring, and they are good jobs. They are high-tech jobs; they are jobs of the future in Ontario.

In a few short years, we have the IESO saying that for the first time, we have a secure energy system in Ontario.

We are helping Ontarians manage their electricity costs through tools to conserve and manage their bills by providing extra help to those who need it most.

I just wanted to look at my own hydro bill. This is the first bill that I've got with the time-of-use meters. Part of what we're trying to do in Ontario, of course, is to change the culture and get a culture of conservation. Without knowing it, I received my first bill—Hydro One may have advised me that it was coming on, but I just received it. Of course it was in July, which was so warm and the air conditioner was on much too much.

1010

On-peak, I had 25% of my kilowatt hours; mid-peak, 40%; off-peak, 35%. Well, we're going to work on that in our own home to see if we can reduce those percentages from the on-peak and the mid-peak. Those dollars may not show up on our bills for several years, but if we can move a good deal off of the on-peak time, then we're not going to have to build that new generation as early; we'll be putting off having to make those major investments in new energy. I think that's where we'll see a lot of the improvements.

The cultural change alone—you'll get that bill, you'll look at it and you'll certainly be more involved in your energy. We agree that the rising cost of energy in Ontario is a burden. That's why Bill 109 has been put forward. It is going to give relief to those seniors and those Ontarians who need it.

Creating a strong, reliable and clean energy system comes at a cost. We know that. Our energy costs more than Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia, but they have abundant hydro supplies. In Ontario, our north is very flat. We heard from the Minister of Energy four or five years ago that there is not much generation in our north compared to Manitoba or Quebec.

We are the only jurisdiction in North America, and maybe in the world, moving to eliminate coal. Four plants closed this month and reductions of coal by 70% are the results from 2003. We're only using 30% of the coal generation now that we were in 2003. We are leading with renewables in North America. That's important.

The hydro costs that we've had are major costs in making our transmission lines more secure and capable of the changes that will be coming to the system. We've brought on 8,000 megawatts of new supply in hydro. It was the Niagara tunnel and the Lower Mattagami.

You will note on your hydro bill that you're paying each month—and I mentioned that in my two-minuter—for stranded debt, which is significant, which goes back to governments previous to ours. We've been paying it down since we started, and I believe it's down to around \$20 billion. We cannot afford to put those hydro costs on to our children any more, so we must pay the full cost of energy in the future.

We're giving Ontarians the tools to conserve energy. Some 350,000 Ontario consumers have participated in the home energy savings program. I did that myself and, as I said, I reduced the energy use in my own home by 25%. That's the only program I know of that the federal government had that was moving in the right direction on greenhouse gas reductions, and they suspended their part of the program on March 31, 2010.

It was a great program. It had the ability to reduce greenhouse gas production across Canada equivalent to what Ontario is doing with getting out of coal: 30 million tonnes of greenhouse gas reductions on an annual basis. We should be promoting that. We should be helping Ontarians make their homes better. We should certainly have the basic job with our homes of at least making them air-tight. That doesn't cost very much, but that is the biggest bang for the buck when you try to reduce energy in your own home. That is a simple thing to do and we should be encouraging it. The federal government should have stayed with us in that program. We've given Ontarians those tools.

The introduction of smart meters will permit users to transfer some of their usage to off-peak hours, when rates are 50% lower than on-peak. Innovation in home design will result from that, and appliance design and cultural change. We will reduce the peak energy use, and we will reduce the need to build new energy sources.

I just completed reading *Storms of My Grandchildren*, written by James Hansen. He's a scientist for NASA who has advised presidents on climate change over many years and has worked as a scientist on climate change for most of his life. I urge you to read his book. He visited the Legislature this September; some of you may have met him.

He is sure that coal generation must stop if we're to keep from reaching, in the lifetime of his granddaughters—and my grandsons and your grandsons—a very turbulent world. The parts per million of CO₂ in our atmosphere is now at 390. We're heading for 450 in 20 or 30 years. He is certain—and he's a scientist; he has been working with earth science all his life, and working for NASA, which is not just any organization. He has been recommending to presidents, and they haven't had the political will to make the changes. But he is certain that 450 parts per million will be catastrophic. That's 20 to 30 years from now.

Closing coal will not be easy, but we are almost there. We'll be the first government to close out coal. That is a great achievement for Ontario. This bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have the privilege of introducing the parents of Alex Schmidt, our page. The parents are Mike and Merry Schmidt, the sister is Andrea Schmidt and the grandmother is Elsie Brunton.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's my pleasure to introduce the grandmother of page Brigid Goulem, a neighbour of mine and former Toronto city councillor, Anne Johnston, who is in the gallery right above us here.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce guests Michael Goldberg and Grant Goldberg, father and brother of Emily. Grant, in fact, was a former page himself.

Mr. Dave Levac: My friend and colleague from Cambridge introduced page Alex's family, but I wanted to point out that Elsie Brunton is a member of the riding of Brant and lives in the town of Paris, Ontario. I wanted to welcome her especially—and I don't know who she votes for.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to introduce Michael St. Amand and Marilyn Lee, the parents of page Chloé St. Amand, from the great riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to introduce the members of the Ontario Lung Association, including the president of the Ontario Lung Association, Mr. George Habib, who is going to be joining us in a minute—a large contingency of people. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park and invite people to attend their reception this evening.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My apologies. I'm not looking for extra face time, but family friend Elizabeth Maclean has also joined us in the members' gallery. Welcome, Elizabeth.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to introduce Gloria Stock from the Ontario Lung Association and Dilshad Moosa, manager, provider of education programs and my constituent from Oak Ridges–Markham, in the public gallery.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise to ask for unanimous consent at this point that all members be permitted to wear bracelets and ribbons in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to introduce a former colleague of mine, a Toronto metropolitan councillor and a great advocate for people with disabilities, Anne Johnston from Pontypool, Ontario.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm really pleased to welcome a number of delegation heads who are attending the 29th congress of the Latin American Studies Association in Toronto. They're making their way up through the chamber now. Of special note is the 15-member University of Havana delegation, accompanied by the consul general of Cuba, Mr. Jorge Soberón. All members are invited to meet this LASA delegation at 12 noon in room 163. Welcome, and I say to them, buenos días y bienvenido.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Doug Cooper, who's visiting from Ottawa as part of the Ontario Lung Association delegation. Welcome to Queen's Park, Doug.

USE OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last evening, in the legislative dining room, we had a celebration for the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of China and Canada. Members of the opposition were only invited to this event at the very last moment by email—yesterday, I be-

lieve. When we got to the event and were handed a brochure, this event was being sponsored by the Premier of Ontario and the consul general for the Republic of China. This event was not being sponsored by the Legislative Assembly.

The emcee, or the person carrying the event, was the Minister of Tourism, Mr. Chan. Mr. Chan gave a very long speech introducing the Premier, which I would characterize as a political introduction that one might hear at a fundraising event for a party.

There was no opportunity for me, as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party, to bring greetings on behalf of my caucus to those present and congratulate the Chinese Canadians who have worked so hard in our province.

As well, when leaving the event, we were given a small gift. That gift did not come from the consul general; it came from the Premier, Dalton McGuinty.

I think it's most poignant in this case that the event include not only government members and participation by government members but participation by the opposition, as we are a democracy in Ontario, a democracy in Canada, whereas the guest organization, as you know, notwithstanding our diplomatic relations with them, is a Communist country, is not a democracy, and we should emphasize that the opposition is a very important part of this Legislature and our democratic structure.

I believe that the government has misused the legislative precinct for their own political purposes. I would ask you to seek compensation from the governing party for any costs associated with the event yesterday.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I rise on the same point of privilege. This was an event that was co-sponsored by the Premier's office and the consul general, but members from all parties were invited. I saw the leader of the third party there. I believe the member from James Bay was there. I noticed that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills was there and was introduced by the deputy consul general. There were representatives from all parties there. They were introduced when they were noted to be there. We had members of the government side there as well, some of whom were introduced and some of whom weren't, because it was a kind of an open invitation.

1040

I would take exception to the fact that the gift was presented by the Premier's office. It was a joint gift by the Premier's office and the consul general. If you looked at the gift, I suggest to the member for Mississippi Mills—the mat that was presented included pictures of former leaders of the federal government, including Brian Mulroney and the present Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, as well as former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and our Premier. So there were a number of leaders acknowledged. The presentation was made by both hosts. All members all the Legislature were invited, to the best of my knowledge. I think it was fully appropriate, and no privileges were violated. You can judge on the quality of the speeches that were given.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just to point out that that was not a point of order or a point of privilege, but I did want to give the member the opportunity to speak. I appreciate the comments made by the government House leader as well.

It's important to note that there is no procedural application that relates to this, but I will say that it does present me with an opportunity—because we've had some situations in the past that have come to my attention—to review the policies of the use of the legislative precinct. I will do so and report back to the honourable members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, one year from today, Ontario families will face a very clear choice between Premier McGuinty, who says he has a more intelligent understanding of Ontario families than they do—but the Ontario PC caucus believes that the best advice comes from the Ontario families who work hard and play by the rules but are last on the list of Dalton McGuinty's priorities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member about the use of titles and names, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: And every day, either I or members of the PC caucus are travelling across this province, speaking directly to those families who pay the bills but your priorities have forgotten about. Today we launched haveyoursayontario.ca to help move Ontario forward. Premier, why aren't you listening to families anymore? What's with all the elite advisers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the free advertising that my colleague opposite is doing. I know he's spending a lot of time talking about the election, but I just don't think that many families are talking about the election today in their homes. I think what they're focused on are their immediate concerns. That includes the quality of their schools; it includes the quality of their health care; and it includes any concerns they might have about the economy insofar as it affects them in their homes.

One of the things that we'll talk about more and more as we move forward is where my honourable colleague has stood in the past with respect to those fundamental priorities that families have always shared, and that is schools for their kids, health care for everybody in the family and the strength of the economy that supports the jobs that mothers and fathers have to be able to count on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The PC caucus invites Ontario families to visit our website, haveyoursayontario.ca, to talk about how we can together move our province forward.

Sadly, Premier McGuinty has surrounded himself with elite advisers and has come up with some bizarre priorities that he never asked families about: his HST sales tax grab that has taken money out of the wallets of hard-working families; a sex ed curriculum that would start sex classes with six-year-olds when they should be learning their ABCs and tying their shoes; and then one of his most bizarre priorities: putting cellphones in classrooms across the province of Ontario.

Premier, you've changed. You've lost touch, and you haven't even spoken to one family about your eco tax grab that you're going to sneak back in next week. Premier, when exactly did—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I choose to leave the gimmickry and the dog whistles and the buzzwords—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, I'd just ask you to withdraw that last comment, please. I have ruled that out of order in the past.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I withdraw that, Speaker.

I refuse to engage in that kind of gimmickry and shallow, wedge politics. I think our families deserve more than that.

In our schools, for example, we've been focused on smaller classes, higher test scores and higher graduation rates. My colleagues opposite said no to our plan, which we put into place, to hire over 11,400 new teachers. They said no to 3,700 new elementary art, music and phys ed teachers. They said no to the 400 new schools we are building in the province of Ontario. They said no to full-day kindergarten, which is benefiting our four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario. They said no to 20 minutes of physical activity in our elementary schools.

When it comes to Ontario education and Ontario students, families know whose side we're on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, your obsession with cellphones in the classroom and banning chocolate milk are a set of priorities that is dramatically out of touch with those of the hard-working families who pay the bills. You have changed; you have lost touch; and you've refused, in fact cancelled, public hearings on the Far North Act; you refused to have public hearings outside of Toronto on your greedy HST tax grab. You still, to this day, refuse to call a public inquiry into eHealth.

We believe that the best advice comes from the hard-working families who pay the bills, who have fallen to last on the list of Premier McGuinty's priorities. Clearly, you've changed, and now Ontario families are looking for change.

After all your tax hikes, your hydro rate increases, Premier, when will you get it? When will you give Ontario families the break they deserve?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague is confusing sloganeering with leadership, and I just see things differently.

Let's just talk a little bit about another very important concern close to the heart of families: health care. The opposition said no to 19 new MRI machines and doubling the number of MRI hours of operation. We've hired 2,300 more doctors—they said no to that. We've hired over 10,000 new nurses—they said no to that. We've increased hospital funding by 50%—they said no to that. We have 100 new hospital infrastructure projects under way, including 18 new hospitals—they said no to that. We opened Canada's first nurse practitioner-led clinics—they said no to that. We're putting in place 200 family health teams—they say no to that. We stand on the side of families when it comes to standing up—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members of the opposition, I have stopped the clock, but if you are going to persist, I will start it again. New question.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier, today also marks the one-year anniversary of the Auditor General's scathing report on your \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle. That was the time when you forced the member for Don Valley East to carry George Smitherman's and your dirty laundry, that saw a billion health-care dollars that could have gone to front-line care, that could have gone to long-term-care homes, that could have helped people get quicker attention from a doctor, and it went into the pockets of your Liberal-friendly consultants. Now, a year later, Premier, you still refuse to call a public inquiry; you still refuse to figure out where those dollars go and put them back into front-line health care where they belong.

Premier, why won't you call a public inquiry? What Liberal friends are you trying to protect?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague and his party stand against electronic health records for Ontarians, but we think it is a very important initiative.

Let me tell you about some of the good news. In 2006, 770,000 Ontarians had electronic medical records. Today, nearly five million Ontarians have electronic medical records. By 2011, seven million Ontarians will be covered. By 2012 we're talking about 10 million Ontarians having electronic medical records. The fact of the matter is, we continue to make progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The first tragedy, Premier, is that you blew \$1 billion in your eHealth boondoggle. The second tragedy is that you have learned absolutely nothing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry to interrupt. Stop the clock, please. There are a number of ministers—

Minister of Transportation, Minister of Health, Minister of Finance, Minister of Energy. I would ask that you please come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You learned absolutely nothing from one of the biggest scandals in the history of our province. And what have we seen from there, Premier? Dollars that should have gone into cancer care that went into the pockets of Liberal-friendly consultants, and you said, "I'm sorry," and you slapped your own wrist. We saw three scandals at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., where you said you're sorry and slapped your wrist. And now we're seeing Liberal-friendly lobbyists who are getting money meant for hospitals and, again, you're saying you're sorry and you slap your wrist.

Premier, people are tired of your phony apologies. They want to see change in our province and they want to see you support the PC motion on health care accountability tonight. Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I haven't seen the motion, but I ask on behalf of Ontarians whether it makes reference to the fact that the opposition would like to cut \$3 billion out of our health care system. I think they're entitled to know that.

The electronic health records—let me tell you why that's so important. This is all about making sure that your health care provider, whether it's your family doctor, your emergency department doctor, your home care nurse or your pharmacist, has access to the right information at the right time so that we can give you the best possible care. More than that, the electronic medical record is also about making sure that every health care provider has access to the best expertise, regardless of where you are being cared for. That's why in government we are so committed to moving forward and to ensuring that this is a genuine success for all Ontarians. It's about improving the quality of their care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: While the Ontario PCs launched haveyoursayontario.ca to hear directly from Ontario families, we have a Premier who boasts that he has a more intelligent understanding of the issues than Ontario families do. You'd think, though, that this Premier, who boasts about his intelligent understanding, would have learned lessons from eHealth, but instead we see now a further \$300 million-plus poured into the program with no results for families. We've seen \$250 million taken from front-line care for your regional health bureaucracies, the LHINs, that don't do one minute of patient care, that don't do a single surgery or a single MRI. Now the Premier says he wants to address retirement homes, but that very same day, Liberal members in the committee voted down the idea of our PC health critic to explore that issue, to fix that problem. Your members voted it down. Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague is working hard to try to undermine confidence

in Ontario health care and I understand he wants to lay a foundation for some very significant cuts that he wants to put—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark should be in his seat.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague wants to undermine confidence in public health care. I can understand that's part of their strategy. They want to do away with electronic health records, which we think are fundamental to improving the quality of health care.

But again, I think it's important to look back on their record. They closed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm quite prepared to allow the Premier to continue. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I mean, it's difficult for them to listen to this, but they're going to have to listen to this and, I can assure you, much more as we move forward.

They closed 28 hospitals on their watch, they shut down 7,100 hospital beds, they fired 6,200 nurses and they remain committed to taking \$3 billion out of the Ontario health care system.

I say shame on them. I say to Ontario families: Beware of this party. Beware of this leader. You should understand who's on your side when it comes to protecting public health care in Ontario.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier and his ministers have stated that public money shouldn't be spent on insider lobbyists. My question is, should municipalities heed that advice as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Health spoke to this yesterday. We believe that is a matter of principle. In this, we part company with the former NDP and Conservative governments. It was a standard that they had in place that they found acceptable; we find it unacceptable. We intend to change the law in the province of Ontario. We're going to ensure that people who find—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will be introducing provisions to make it perfectly clear that Ontario tax dollars are not to be used by the broader public sector and agencies to lobby their government in order to secure still more funding or one benefit or another. We think that's in keeping with the values and standards shared by families and taxpayers generally, and that's why we'll be moving on that front.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every day, the gap between what this Premier says and what his government actually does widens.

The city of Brampton is paying the former vice-president of the Ontario Liberal Party \$129,000 to lobby this government. Durham region has a contract with another former Liberal staffer for \$23,000. Why do municipalities think that in order to be heard by this government, they need to find a well-connected lobbyist and hand them a lucrative contract?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we look forward to introducing these new measures.

We're always interested in any advice offered by the opposition parties, but I must say, they have not been there in terms of supporting accountability and transparency in the past. When we expanded the sunshine list to include OPG and Hydro One, the opposition opposed that. When we asked the Auditor General to begin value-for-money audits of the broader public sector—hospitals, universities and schools—the opposition opposed that. When we asked the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of our 22 largest agencies, the opposition opposed that. When we made publicly posting expenses mandatory for ministers, political staff and senior managers in the 22 largest agencies, again the opposition opposed that. Every time we move forward with a new accountability measure and a transparency measure, they oppose it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families want a government that listens, not one that charges access fees. The town of Tecumseh is paying former Liberal staffers Andrew Steele and Katie Telford \$25,000 for their insider connections. The city of Niagara Falls paid StrategyCorp \$102,000 last year.

Why are municipalities forced to turn to the Premier's friends to get their issues on the agenda?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate my colleague's advice in this regard, but I want to come back to the record of the opposition.

As I say, every single time we have moved forward with a new measure to heighten accountability and transparency, they have stood in the way of those measures.

More recently, we asked both parties if they might post their leaders' offices' expenses. We asked them that in February, and they have yet to comply. When we go home, so to speak, right into their offices and ask them to comply with the advice that they put forward, they refuse to do that.

1100

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The province provides billions of dollars to municipalities. Families themselves contribute billions more through their property taxes. They're paying for transit; they're paying for road maintenance and for

garbage collection, but the money still keeps finding its way into the pockets of well-connected insider lobbyists. For seven years, this Premier has allowed former staffers and partisans to collect this public subsidy. Why should people believe him when he says he plans to stop it now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am very, very proud of this government's record with regard to our relationship with municipalities. Never in the history of this government of the province of Ontario have we had a better working relationship than with the municipalities. We understand that they are a very important, integral part to ensuring that the lives of Ontarians are made better. We work with them. We don't fight with them; we don't download; we don't diminish the services, as when you were in government. We will continue to ensure that that partnership is strong. We will continue to ensure that we respect municipalities and that we deal with municipalities in a responsible way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The town of Oakville spent \$9,000 on a lobbyist, a counsel of public affairs. The Premier might be familiar with that particular lobbyist: Charles Beer, a former Liberal cabinet minister. The town says, "We're just trying to get support for a new hospital." I don't blame them. Why do municipalities have to hire the Premier's friends in order to get ahead?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: In order to ensure that the member understands the type of working relationship we have with municipalities, let me quote a little bit about the relationship and how it has benefited the city of Hamilton: \$16.77 million for 186 rental units; \$350,000 for 20 homeownership units. We are talking about affordable housing. The social housing renovation and retrofit program: in 2009-10, \$18.6 million; in 2010-11, \$14.2 million. The rent bank program that we on this side think is important: \$226,000 in 2009, for a total of \$1.2 million. We prevented 1,152 evictions.

The reality is, when it comes to caring for the people of Ontario in any class, this is a government that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families pay their taxes. They expect their hard-earned dollars to fix potholes and build better public transit, not make life easier for Liberal MPPs and staffers. Municipalities shouldn't have to be redirecting their money into the pockets of well-connected lobbyists, well-connected Liberal insiders. Will the Premier support a ban on public sector lobbyists that includes municipalities?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: As I deal with the municipal councils, as I deal with the municipalities, more and more am I hearing the fact that they are very, very excited about the continuing partnership. You know what they say, though? They really tell me that "NDP" stands for "No Developed Plan": no developed plan for long-term affordable housing; no developed plan for social housing; no developed plan for affordable housing; no developed

plan for housing in general; no developed plan for official plans; no developed plans for provincial policy statements; no developed plans for short-term rent support; no developed plan for retirement homes.

The reality is, this government has a plan. We will continue that relationship with municipalities because it is important. We know that the people of Ontario define the NDP as "No Developed Plan."

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. One year from today, Ontario families can choose to put an end to the McGuinty Liberals' pattern of not doing anything about eHealth-style rot until they get caught. Ontario PCs won't wait until next year to put forward ideas for change, which is why I put forward my motion and which is why we asked the Premier to explain the record increase in what families paid for eHealth last year. The health minister's response to our question about the hundreds of millions more they spent was a boast about reducing consultant use.

So my question is, how did you manage to break the member for Don Valley East's record for eHealth spending by \$100 million when you have fewer consultants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm actually very happy to have the opportunity to talk about eHealth. We haven't been talking about it a lot lately, but there's a lot to talk about.

We are moving forward aggressively to electronic health records in this province. The future of our health care system depends on us being successful in moving from the old paper-based system to the electronic system of the future.

I am very distressed and surprised, frankly, to hear the opposition party talking about putting the brakes on eHealth. We need to do exactly the opposite. Our patients are counting on us. If you talk to people, they want electronic health records. And do you know who wants it the most? Seniors want it the most because they have more interaction with the health care system. They're used to electronic banking. They're used to other electronic services. They want electronic health records.

We're moving forward. We're providing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is that electronic health records are absolutely essential to our health care system in future years, but this government has totally dropped the ball and we're no closer to these records than we were five years ago.

Back to the question: You don't need to understand the Premier's "more intelligent understanding" to figure out that runaway budget increases while reducing consultants has more to do with consultants being added to eHealth's payroll. Former Courtyard consultant Ian Fish is now added to the permanent staff, and there are sure to be others.

Ontario families are looking for a change from the McGuinty government, which didn't give a straight answer to the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle a year ago and still aren't.

My question: How many other former consultants are Ontario families paying for, but now as eHealth employees?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am astounded at the lack of foundation for the question. We are making tremendous progress. You heard the Premier earlier, if you were listening, talk about how many more people now have access to electronic health records. That actually costs money, and that's what we're doing.

I do want to tell you about one story that I'm particularly proud of, and I'm sure the member from Timmins-James Bay is interested in this as well. Just last week, the communities along the James Bay coast got hooked up to the Ontario Telemedicine Network. That means that people in Attawapiskat and people in the James Bay communities now have access to excellent health care without leaving their home communities.

We've greatly expanded the Ontario Telemedicine Network, and we are continuing to move forward with electronic—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

After seven years of the McGuinty Liberals, why are our seniors waiting more than 618 days for a long-term-care bed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. The member opposite raises an important question, and that is, how do we move forward in providing the best possible care for our frail and elderly seniors in this community?

We are expanding capacity when it comes to long-term care. We are improving the quality of care. We are improving staffing levels in our long-term care. We are also focusing very heavily on providing care outside of long-term care, in the community, at home, where people want to stay.

Our aging-at-home strategy—over a billion dollars—across this province is actually keeping people out of long-term care and, in some wonderful cases, bringing people from long-term care back into their own homes.

We do need to expand capacity. We are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: Why do I feel like saying, "How is it working so far?" Minister, 618 days is a long wait away.

Under McGuinty's watch, the wait time for Ontario nursing homes jumped by 129%. Seniors with complex health care needs are forced into retirement homes. What do we see in retirement homes? We see seniors left in

urine- and feces-filled briefs for hours at a time. We see people with dementia wiping themselves with their hands or with a flimsy communal towel. This is gross; this is disgusting; this is disgraceful and appalling. The Premier should be ashamed. Why has he allowed this crisis to fester for the last seven years under his watch?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For the first time ever, we are regulating retirement homes in this province. I think all of us would agree that it is time to do that. It is time to turn our attention to the quality of care in retirement homes.

We will continue to invest in long-term care. We are spending more than \$1 billion more now in long-term care than when we took office in 2003. We have built more than 8,000 new long-term-care beds, and more are coming. We are working very hard to address this issue. We are seeing the results. We know there is more to do and we have a plan to do that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. For years we've been seeing a shift in the world economy. In northwestern Ontario, where resource-based industries have for a very long time underpinned our economy, a variety of factors have impacted the viability of some of these industries. Global competition, a huge increase in the value of the Canadian dollar, a collapse in demand in the American market as a result of the global recession and the credit crisis have all created difficult economic environments across North America.

In spite of this, there continue to be good-news stories coming out of northwestern Ontario. Can the minister highlight a very recent good-news story in the forestry sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan for the question. I'm certainly very pleased to share a good-news story about the forestry sector.

This past Monday, I was in Terrace Bay to help celebrate the reopening of the Terrace Bay Pulp mill—a great piece of news—bringing 340 people back to work. I'm very pleased that our government was able to provide a conditional loan, which allowed the company to access further funding assistance and also to have some creditor protection. As I say, 340 are people back to work and a couple hundred more in the woodland section. This means a great deal to people in Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Marathon, Nipigon and Red Rock.

This pulp mill is an extremely important asset, one that indeed means a great deal to the Terrace Bay taxpayers. It provides about 40% of the tax base to the community of Terrace Bay.

Certainly, you can tell that Mayor King couldn't have been happier about this. He said that we've probably gone through the hardest time we've ever seen in Terrace Bay. It's nice to see that burden lifted off—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Minister, and I do know how grateful Mayor Mike King was. I congratulate you on your efforts as well. I do remember very clearly, when the Premier was at NOMA last week, when that gentleman came over and thanked the Premier as well. He had three sons—one man, three sons hired back in that mill, and we know how grateful he was.

We also know that there are a significant number of supports that have been made available to forestry companies over the last number of years. More importantly, in our 2010 budget, we added more support on top of the initiatives in programs that already exist. While we can't fix the fact that there is a diminished demand for two-by-fours because of the collapse of the US housing market, there are measures that we have taken and continue to take to support those companies still operating and to create a climate to encourage more to reopen. Can the minister please highlight some of these programs for the House?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: There is indeed more good news. I must say, to drive up to the gate at Terrace Bay Pulp and see the smoke coming out of the stack—it was a wonderful thing to see the smiles on the faces of the 340 workers.

We've also set the stage for a transformation in the forestry sector as it moves into a new phase. Since 2005, our government has made available over \$1 billion through various programs to assist the forestry sector: a loan guarantee fund; we uploaded the road maintenance, which had been downloaded by a previous government; and the forest sector prosperity fund as well. But another example of how this sector is transforming: In 2009, our government, through the budget, committed \$25 million to creating the Centre for Research and Innovation in the Bioeconomy in Thunder Bay, a tremendous announcement. This plan will coordinate the government, the companies and the secondary industries as we transform the economy.

The fact is, the forest industry is in the midst of a transformation, one that we strongly support, and we're excited about the good news ahead.

HEALTH CARE SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. One year from today, Ontario families will have a choice of a Premier McGuinty who says he has a more intelligent understanding than they do. Ontario PCs haven't been waiting for next year to come. We've already put forward groundbreaking accountability legislation that, in light of hospital lobbying contracts, is proving to be quite a topic on this, the anniversary of the eHealth scandal. We've also put forward a motion to strike a legislative committee to fix the problems at retirement homes.

I ask the Premier, why are the McGuinty Liberals against the changes that Ontario families want today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are going to continue to improve transparency and accountability in this province. We are the party that has opened up to freedom of information. We've expanded the powers of the Auditor General. We are committed to publicly posting information on health care, on wait times and on a number of different initiatives.

It's time to move forward. I look forward to the debate this afternoon on the opposition day motion, but let me assure you, when it comes to transparency and accountability, we will take no lessons from the party opposite. It was the party that stood in our way every single step we have taken toward transparency.

I'm proud of our record. We're going to do more, and I look forward to introducing legislation in the near future that will provide expression to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier McGuinty is out of touch with the priorities of Ontario families. While the Premier was busy contemplating how many millilitres of chocolate milk our sons and daughters should be allowed to consume, Ontario families paid another \$343 million for eHealth, the Ombudsman exposed secret, illegal LHIN meetings, and we uncovered LHINs, Cancer Care Ontario and now hospitals handing out eHealth-style sweetheart deals. I suppose the only silver lining in the Premier's approach is that when the McGuinty milk police catch our sons and daughters buying that extra carton of milk, at least they'll have cellphones in the classrooms to call their buddies to bail them out.

Premier, do Ontario families who want change have to wait another year for that change?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The entertainment level is rising in this place, and I guess we can expect that for the next—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The comedian's up now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I hope that wasn't a reference to the Speaker.

The member from Simcoe North, the member from Lanark, the member from Oxford and the member from Leeds-Grenville will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to make it very clear that we are of the position that taxpayer dollars ought not to be spent to lobby government for more taxpayer dollars. This is something we can all agree on. As I said, we will be introducing legislation to make sure that people understand that that is an inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars.

We've focused a lot of our attention on reducing the use of consultants in this province. In fact, we've cut in half the number of consultants working in this province.

But I do have a question for the opposition: When will you post your expenses? We've asked you for months and months now to post your leader's office expenses. If you're such a believer in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, these not-so-smart meters have come to northern Ontario, and people listened intently a couple of weeks ago when you suggested that how we deal with this is to do our washing on weekends. We have a question in northern Ontario. We'd like to know: When are we supposed to heat our homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have a question as well. Either the NDP want to build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy or they don't.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe-Grey, member from Lanark, member from Simcoe-Grey, again.

Minister?

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: Day after day over the last couple of weeks, this member's leader has gotten up in this House, opposing the investments we're making to build that stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy.

Let me talk about some of the things that our investments are doing in the north. The member opposite was with me as we celebrated the Lower Mattagami hydro project in his riding, creating 800 jobs in the north, something we're celebrating in his community. Let me go on. Kenora-Rainy River: 140 jobs, Lac Seul hydro-electric.

Does his leader support those jobs or does she not? If you don't support the investments to get us there—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, we've been told when to do our washing. My question is a very simple one. We know now, in northern Ontario—the not-so-smart meters have come to northern Ontario—that the on-peak will become the mid-peak, and the mid-peak will become the off-peak, come November.

We're wondering, when are we supposed to heat our homes, when the full charge of electricity on-peak is going to be between 5 and 9 at night and 7 and 11 in the morning? My question to you is, when are we supposed to heat our homes?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We will not be able to modernize our electricity system without making these important investments. We will not be able to build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system without making these investments.

The NDP cannot have it both ways. We cannot create the jobs we're creating in the north if we don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Perhaps some of these cross-floor conversations, which are not part of the rhythm of question period, would be

much better taken outside. There are a lot of members and guests who want to be attentive, to listen to the discourse back and forth across the floor, and we are all being challenged because of some of these cross-floor conversations. I would very much encourage those members to please take those outside.

New question.

SMOKING CESSATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport. Today, representatives of the Ontario Lung Association are present here at Queen's Park and meeting with members about the need for a strong smoking cessation system in Ontario. As a physician, and representing the people of Oak Ridges-Markham, this is an extremely important issue for my constituents and me.

Could the minister tell us how the government is working to encourage Ontarians to quit smoking?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'd like to take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the member from Oak Ridges-Markham for her question and her advocacy for health promotion.

I commend the Ontario Lung Association—and again take this opportunity to welcome them to the Legislature—for engaging members today on smoking cessation, and for the valued partnership which we, as a government, share with them.

While I take this opportunity to remind Ontarians of the dangers of cigarette smoking and the importance of not starting to smoke in the first place, our government recognizes that smoking is an addiction.

Over the last five years, we have invested \$33.8 million in smoking cessation. Thirty-nine hospitals are participating in the Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation program, which identifies and treats smokers admitted to hospital. We support the Driven to Quit Challenge.

These are only a few of the examples—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I am glad to hear that the government takes smoking cessation seriously and is working with tobacco control partners like the Ontario Lung Association to educate and provide assistance to Ontarians looking to quit.

The smoke numbers are clear: In the recent Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, 15% of Ontarians 15 years of age and older smoked last year. While that number is the lowest amongst all provinces, a distinction we share with British Columbia, we cannot take our successes for granted.

Minister, how will the government move forward on the issue of smoking cessation?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Cigarettes kill—that is not new news. What is good news these days is the Vital Signs report for Toronto in 2009, which showed only 2% of seventh graders had smoked their first cigarette by grade 6, compared to 27% in 1997.

Also, the numbers from the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey demonstrate significant strides have occurred in reducing smoking rates through our smoke-free Ontario strategy.

However, there is much more work to be done, and that is precisely why we are working with partners like the Ontario Lung Association as we develop our plan to establish new directions in tobacco control. We will build on our past successes, such as banning smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces, banning tobacco power walls, protecting children in cars, and \$300-million worth of investment in the smoke-free Ontario strategy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I share the alarm expressed by many in my riding about your ministry's plan to force a merger between the Leeds and the Grenville stewardship councils. This short-sighted scheme risks undermining 15 years of great work done by these groups, and even your own ministry staff say it will reduce the capacity to deliver invaluable environmental programming. Incredibly, you're doing this as my riding is under threat from the emerald ash borer beetle.

Minister, please tell the people of Leeds–Grenville what you have against these councils. Is it the hundreds of thousands of dollars in programming they leverage every year? Is it the thousands of children to whom they provide hands-on learning opportunities? Or is it the wonderful trust that has been built between landowners and government? Please tell me, Minister.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm very pleased to answer this question. I want to tell you how proud I am of the MNR's Ontario stewardship program. It focuses on protection and restoration of Ontario's natural resources through community engagement and support.

It's pretty rich for this question to be asked by this member when, in fact, when your party was in power, in 1996 you closed MNR area offices in the province. You closed an office in Brockville. You closed an office in Carleton Place. You closed an office in Carleton. You closed it in Napanee. You closed it at Tweed.

At the end of the day, we are streamlining our efforts in Leeds and Grenville, not closing them. It's something we are proud of, our relationship with those partners in the communities providing restoration efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, you know it's pretty rich for this minister to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's pretty rich that this minister talks the way she does. Due to the fact that you've pushed Bill 191 through—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. That took eight seconds from the moment I sat down—

Mr. John Yakabuski: They won't co-operate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful either.

Please continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's pretty rich that the minister talks about pushing things through in consultation when, clearly, you failed to consult people with Bill 191, and your ministry, which actually has an office in my riding in Kemptonville, is trying to do the same thing with this merger.

A week before the public meeting to discuss this unpopular proposal, here's what district manager Alex Gardner told a reporter: "Planning for 2012 will proceed based on an integrated council." In other words, it was a done deal, and the meeting was just for show.

Minister, why are you so afraid of consultation? Will you commit to meet with the leadership of these two stewardship councils and hear their concerns directly?

1130

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm really proud of the work that we do with our stewardship councils. They are a group that help us with education, they do workshops, they do high school outreach, they do creek restoration projects, they do water management and wetland restoration training, and most importantly, they help us with species-at-risk education. That's something that this government believes in, the Endangered Species Act, something you voted against, and yet you, at this point, are indicating you're supportive of stewardship programs. You have to walk the walk, you have to support endangered species, and that's what these stewardship programs do. We support the work that these groups do. We are committed to a stewardship approach in Ontario. These volunteers are extraordinarily important in supporting endangered species, and they help us with those projects. We're proud of our relationship.

HOSPITAL GOVERNANCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Earlier this week, the London Free Press reported that London Health Sciences Centre is paying an American for-profit consulting company \$640,000 to lead employees through an internal communications training course. Does this minister think that spending close to two thirds of a million dollars on a dubious communications course is an appropriate use of front-line health care dollars?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. You know, when it comes to hospitals, I think the member opposite understands that our hospitals are separate entities. They are heavily funded, of course, by the

province, but they do have boards of directors and they are responsible for their governance.

We are, however, very clear with hospitals about expectations we have when it comes to quality of care and when it comes to the services they provide. We have strict accountability agreements that are negotiated between the LHINs and the hospitals, so that when people pay their taxes in this province, they have the assurance that the money they are paying in taxes is going to better health care. We work hard with our hospitals to get the outcomes we expect, whether it's lower wait times or higher quality or higher volumes of service, but we do leave the governance of hospitals to those hospital boards.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: London Health Sciences Centre has been cutting costs in other areas. Nurse examiner positions at the breast screening program were completely eliminated. Those nurses would still be on the job with the money being spent on this questionable American training course.

During this time of restraint, the minister has an obligation to instruct hospitals to focus spending on front-line care. Why is this minister so obviously failing to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm not going to comment on this particular decision at this particular hospital. We do rely on the hospital governance to govern those hospitals and to make the right decisions.

But I think it's just a bit naive to suggest that front-line care can happen as efficiently and as effectively as possible without the proper communications and interactions between different employees in the hospital. LHSC has 13,000 staff and positions; 13,000 people work at LHSC; it's 846 beds. It's important to properly train the people working in the hospital to work together to improve outcomes, to improve quality of care and to improve the value for money that we are getting for our health care dollars.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. People in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex rely heavily on propane for their rural homes and farms. Propane has always been regarded as an efficient energy source for cooking and heating in the home, and even more importantly, for heating livestock barns, drying grain and other farm activities.

I have been approached by not only farmers but also small propane facility owners concerned about the propane safety requirements that will be coming into effect in January. Minister, I understand that you are seeking input to the proposal that will assist small facility owners in achieving the intent of the requirements. What effect will your proposal have on small facility owners and, ultimately, on my constituents?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let me congratulate this member, as well as our other rural members, for

great advocacy on this particular issue—as well as northern members.

First of all, safety of Ontarians is our ultimate concern when it comes to the issue of propane, and everything is based on that. However, we've also listened to the small operators and are proposing a template risk and safety management plan that is more appropriate for smaller facilities. As a matter of fact, we posted this proposal on the regulatory website yesterday. The template would reduce the cost and complexity for small facilities, which can complete the templates themselves. We will also require the local fire department to review and comment on the template. It would include such information as basic facility information, updated facility plans, a map of the surrounding area, and, of utmost importance, an emergency response and preparedness plan.

We are also going to allow the facilities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the minister for the attention that he gave our rural caucus when we first brought this issue to his attention.

The 2008 Sunrise explosion was a terrible and tragic event. As a result of that, propane safety became even more of a priority for Ontarians. Our government, as a result, created an expert propane panel to make recommendations regarding propane safety.

For all our constituents, safety has always been a priority, but most especially for those who live close to a propane facility. Minister, how does our proposed approach compare to the safety standards of other jurisdictions?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Public safety is our first and primary concern, and that's why we've worked, both my predecessor, the former minister, and myself, on this issue for the last six months to come up with a system that will work for everybody.

The risk and safety management plans are a new safety requirement based on international best practices. We will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to mandate these plans both for large and small facilities. The larger facilities will have to go through the entire process and have their plans, in effect, be certified by engineers.

We will continue to work with our partners towards continuous improvement to ensure that Ontario has the highest possible standards. I think this will work for everyone, but we want to make sure that the people of Ontario have the best safety in mind when it comes to the use of propane.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. For 30 years, rural intellectually disabled adults in the Kawartha Lakes region have been using buses provided by the school boards to access their day programs and volunteer placements. Your ministry has now intervened and ordered the two boards to stop busing these people. You have gone as far as to threaten

the Catholic board with clawbacks and a supervisor if they do not obey you.

Minister, both boards support these adults, as does the community, but you and the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock appear not to. Why is your ministry determined to deny these most vulnerable people access to lifelong and continued learning?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This is an important issue, and the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has brought this to my attention. We certainly have looked at all of the issues, the responsibilities and roles of school boards, as well as other community partners in this important issue.

We continue to believe that the resolution of this very important issue is to be found in the local communities. I have been given to understand by the local member that there is a commitment there to find a resolution for this very important issue. I certainly appreciate his advocacy and his very good work on this file. Again, I know that all partners involved do want to find—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1140

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the minister again: The response is cold comfort to the parents of these young adults.

I have heard from many people in the Kawartha Lakes region, and not just the parents. They are upset and hurt by the decision to cancel busing and the rigid policies of this ministry.

Roseanna Vachon, whose daughter has ridden the bus for years, states, "This government has turned its back on our most vulnerable citizens, robbing them of life and denying them access to continued learning, and is putting them in crisis." She is lobbying to retain busing for her daughter and seven disabled adults.

Minister, will you show compassion and provide busing for these people?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's important that the members of this House appreciate how hard the local member has been advocating for the families in the region. This is a very unique—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, the local member has been working so very hard. As I have already stated, there is definitely a desire within the community to have this issue addressed, and I am confident that with all of the best of intentions within the community, there will be a resolution to this matter found locally within the community.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. On October 4, US Steel idled the blast furnace at its Hamilton worksite. This is a repeat of its 2008 shutdown when

it promised not to cause any job losses, but reduced the workforce below its promised 3,100 minimum.

The loan that this government gave to Stelco made the sale of Stelco more attractive to US Steel because it lessened the liability that US Steel would have been responsible for. What safeguards were put in place for this loan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The safeguards that were put in place were mostly designed to protect pensions of workers, and that was the role the government of Ontario played in that.

This is an unfortunate situation that has occurred. The Premier and the Minister of Economic Development have been working very hard on this file, as we have on a range of files around the situation in Hamilton, and as have the member for Hamilton Mountain and other colleagues.

The government's original involvement was to protect workers' pensions. We did that. That was appropriate at the time. That was supported by a range of advocates in the Hamilton community. It remains the right thing to have done at that point in time.

With the challenges now faced by that particular circumstance, this government remains prepared to work with the community, both on that and other alternatives, to help create more jobs in the Hamilton region.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That wasn't the question, but anyway.

Hamilton Works processes Canadian iron ore from Labrador. The Canadian steel industry, as a whole, cannot meet the domestic demand for Canada. When US Steel bought Stelco, part of the agreement was to maintain a minimum workforce and certain levels of production. US Steel locked out Lake Erie workers to force concessions. With the idling of the blast furnace, it appears that US Steel is not fulfilling its obligations again.

What safeguards are in place to keep the processing of Canadian raw materials in Hamilton, the steel centre for Canada?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member knows full well that what he speaks about is largely federal jurisdiction. We will work with the federal government on this situation and others to help protect the interest of that community and the workers there.

The member opposite has to know as well that there has been a consolidation in this industry around North America. The broader decisions we're taking are designed to enhance Ontario's opportunity for new investment, from a range of tax reforms to a range of investments through loan programs and so on, to a range of programs that have been designed in effect to protect workers' pensions, as we did in 2006 with the situation in Hamilton. The member for Ancaster lobbied strongly on that—and the member from Hamilton Mountain. We will continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. The people of Ontario have increasingly high expectations of the services they receive from our government. In many cases, Ontarians expect that service to be as good as or better than that of the private sector. Ontarians want convenience and accessible services delivered by a well-trained and courteous staff who are willing to go the extra mile.

I am aware that your ministry is expanding services and making the experience simpler and easier for Ontarians to access their government services. Minister, can you please tell the House what the government is doing to improve services to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking the question. This is Customer Service Week, so this gives me an opportunity to actually recognize the hard work of our civil servants, especially those who work on the front lines to provide outstanding service to all Ontarians with the highest degree of care and professionalism.

Our first priority is to continue to provide a high degree of personal service to all Ontarians by providing all of our services under one roof, making it convenient for them to avail themselves of those services, and also by providing service guarantees and providing services within a certain radius as well.

This is our priority, and we will continue to focus on that. I want to thank again all the civil servants who provide the front-line services.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very privileged today to introduce one of my constituents, Ms. Gloria Stock. She's from Bowmanville and she represents the COPD program for the Ontario Lung Association—a wonderful person. I thank her for being at Queen's Park here today.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to recognize in our gallery today here Rory Gleeson, Emily MacKenzie Strowger and Marie Lauren Gregoire, who are all here from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; as well as Jo Michaels from Jewish Child and Family Service; Rob Thompson from the Toronto CAS; and Suset Silva from the Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RED WEEKEND

Mr. Robert Bailey: I recently attended a special event in Petrolia in my riding, organized by Linda and Gene

Smith, known as the RED Weekend. RED is an acronym for remembering everyone deployed. The purpose of this event is to celebrate and show support for our nation's military personnel, veterans and first responders and their families.

On Friday, the RED Weekend special tribute was paid to three families from Sarnia-Lambton who lost loved ones in service to our country. I would like to particularly mention them by name: William J.J. Cushley, Trooper Mark Wilson and Corporal Brent D. Poland. Each has made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. They and their families are deserving of our utmost respect and gratitude, and we, as Canadians, owe them much.

The important and dangerous role that military personnel fulfill on a daily basis is all too often overlooked in our busy day-to-day lives.

Soldiers of the 23rd field squadron of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment have dubbed her "the Petrolia Cookie Lady," but I know her as Karen Wilson. Ms. Wilson is a steady baker, and steadfast. On a regular basis, she sends her delicious cookies off to the Canadian personnel stationed in Afghanistan. They are very thankful for her efforts and thank her for sending them a little taste from home.

CHATHAM CAPITOL THEATRE

Mr. Pat Hoy: Nearly 14 years and \$21 million later, our community celebrated the grand opening of the Chatham Capitol Theatre on September 17.

Our government invested \$7 million towards its restoration. In addition, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities joined in a job creation partnership to allow job seekers to develop their skills. They were part of a large crew of professional tradespeople decorating exterior façades, installing ceiling tiles in the lounges, foyers and dressing rooms, and rebuilding and installing the opera boxes.

The theatre is a 1,200-seat entertainment venue in the heart of downtown Chatham. It first opened as a movie theatre during the Depression in 1930. Today it is a first-class venue for live entertainment. I would like to give a special thank you to Bob Fox, the project manager, who donated part of a lifetime toward its restoration.

Congratulations to all the volunteers and corporate and individual donors in helping make this day a reality.

The theatre is a cultural and architectural landmark and will be a vital part of the revitalization of our local culture and tourism opportunities.

Coming attractions include Bill Cosby and Howie Mandel; music acts such as Great Big Sea, Josh Turner and Michelle Wright; and family entertainment such as The Nutcracker, the Vienna Boys' Choir and many more. My wife and I will be taking our grandson to see The Very Hungry Caterpillar in November.

I invite everyone in the Legislature and outside this place to reserve your tickets for this unforgettable experience.

GOODYEAR TIRE AND RUBBER CO.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's certainly my privilege, as the member for Durham, to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Goodyear plant in Bowmanville.

In 1910, the Goodyear tire company chose to locate its first plant outside the United States in the town of Bowmanville. At that time, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. of Canada employed about 150 people. The starting salary at the time was 12 cents an hour, which was considered a good wage in those times.

A century later, the plant is still operating, being run by Veyance Technologies, a division of Goodyear.

Goodyear's record as a corporate citizen is well known throughout Durham region. It has supported many local initiatives, including the Bowmanville hospital, the Skate '88 fundraiser for the Garnet B. Rickard ice rink, and most recently the "Support Our Troops" banners displayed in the town of Bowmanville.

The company was a key contributor to Canada's manufacturing efforts in World War II.

I'd like to congratulate the company's former plant manager, good friend Wally Hicks, and the current plant manager, Roy Moore, on the 100 years of good service to our community. I wish the plant and all those who work there and their families a happy anniversary and continued opportunities for future employment in the community.

ONTARIO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OPTICAL NETWORK

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'd like to share with my constituents and the House an exciting milestone reached in my community of Ottawa last week. On September 29, I was pleased to see ORION, the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network, adding the Ottawa Catholic School Board to their advanced ultra-high bandwidth research and education network.

With the addition of the OCSB, ORION is now reaching over a million primary and secondary students in Ontario in 25 school boards, more than half of Ontario's kindergarten-to-12 student population.

ORION speeds are 100 to 1,000 times faster than regular Internet. With these capabilities, schools can enjoy enhanced video conferencing and participate in the many distance learning programs offered by leading cultural and educational organizations like the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canadian Museum of Nature, the Canadian Space Agency, and the Virtual Researcher on Call, or VROC, program.

ORION is a not-for-profit organization supported by the government of Ontario and other partners. I'm pleased to congratulate the Ottawa Catholic School Board, ORION and the 35,000 Ottawa students who now have access to this exciting learning resource.

GERMAN PIONEERS DAY

Mr. Frank Klees: Ontario is the first province to officially recognize the historic and ongoing contribu-

tions to our society of Canadians of German ancestry by proclaiming the day following Thanksgiving as German Pioneers Day. This was made possible thanks to the efforts of my colleague and friend Wayne Wettlaufer, the former MPP for Kitchener Centre.

The immigration of settlers of German origin to Canada began with the coming of the first Loyalists at the end of the 18th century. In the 1820s, citizens of German origin made up a full 70% of the entire population as a true founding people of the province of Ontario. The heroic German Loyalist military unit known as the Brunswickers fought many battles in defence of Canada and most notably Quebec.

German Canadians founded Toronto and Markham and constructed Yonge Street from Toronto to Penetanguishene. Many settled in the regions of Kitchener-Waterloo, Niagara, Woodstock and Lake Huron.

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Famous German Canadians included Fathers of Confederation William Steeves and Sir Charles Tupper; Canada's sixth Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker; and Governor General Ed Schreyer.

As a proud German Canadian, and on the 20th anniversary of German unity, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our entire German-Canadian community for its ongoing pivotal role in the historic and continuing development of Ontario, socially, culturally, economically and politically.

Happy Oktoberfest and happy German Pioneers Day.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Following on the good news about the conversion of the coal plant in Atikokan to biomass, I recently had more good news for the community. With the great support of the Minister of Natural Resources, Linda Jeffrey, I was able to announce that our government will be allowing two companies to move forward with an environmental assessment on the former Steep Rock mine site.

There is significant mining exploration and activity occurring in Ontario, and Atikokan is no exception. Approximately 100 people have already found work at the Hammond Reef property owned by the Osisko gold company. This company, along with Bending Lake Iron Group, submitted a joint proposal to use this site to process their ore bodies and/or dispose of their tailings.

If the environmental assessment is successfully concluded and the mine goes into operation, the companies predict that hundreds of construction and long-term jobs will be created as a result of the project. If successful, this initiative could provide a significant boost to the economy of Atikokan and the broader northwest.

As stated earlier, there is significant economic activity already occurring in Atikokan. This activity was further supported by our government with \$150,000 from the northern Ontario heritage fund toward the Sawbill road project. This initiative provided workers with quicker and easier access to the mine properties, and our assistance

leveraged significant investment from the companies themselves.

We continue to lay the foundations for further economic growth in Atikokan.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: For over 60 times I've risen in this House and presented petitions signed by over 25,000 people in the northeast asking for equitable access to PET scanning technology. To this day, the Minister of Health refuses to fund a PET scan for the people of the northeast, yet another indication that the McGuinty government disregards the people of northern Ontario and is telling very ill northerners that they can drive five to 12 hours to get to the closest PET scan.

Could you imagine the reaction if very ill cancer patients in Toronto were told by the government, "Sorry, you'll just have to drive to Montreal or Quebec City to get your PET scan"? This is the same distance that the people I represent in the northeast have to drive to the nearest PET scan.

In Sudbury, in memory of Mr. Sam Bruno, who passed away after a lengthy battle against his cancer, the community has taken up his fight to get a PET scan for Sudbury Regional Hospital. Despite the hard economic times in our community, the good people of Sudbury region will raise \$3.5 million to make the PET scan a reality for the people of the northeast, with a dinner and fundraising gala titled Pulling Everyone Together in the Spirit of Sam Bruno, which will be held on November 18 at the Caruso Club.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Our government is serious about protecting the environment and the health of Ontarians, so we're working to fulfill our promise to reduce the number of coal-fired plants in Ontario.

Last week we announced that four more units would be closed. This is the equivalent of taking two million cars off the road. This commitment has been supported by both environmental groups and doctors alike for reducing pollutants and health-related complications.

On October 1, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario supported the closure in a press release. Doris Grinspun, the executive director of RNAO, said, "Nurses are pleased with today's announcement because it will save lives. Getting rid of toxins such as mercury and lead would reduce the estimated 100,000 asthma attacks and other illnesses that people suffer as a result of pollution from coal."

Dr. Rick Smith, the executive director of Environmental Defence, says, "Ontario can't afford the costs of coal any longer—the smog, human illness and global warming that coal-fired energy brings. Replacing coal with renewable energy is a bargain by any measure."

While previous governments refused to consider closing dirty coal plants, our government is making

investments in a cleaner and healthier energy future for all Ontario families.

ONTARIO LUNG ASSOCIATION

Mr. Dave Levac: The Ontario Lung Association assists, educates and empowers individuals living with or caring for others with lung disease. They do this through lung health programs and services that are available to people and health care providers across the province.

The Ontario Lung Association is among Canada's longest-standing, most respected not-for-profit health promotion organizations. The lung association provides education and support to people living with lung disease in Ontario and relies on the generosity of donors and educational partners across the province.

On October 6, 2010—today—the Ontario Lung Association will be hosting a reception here at Queen's Park to speak to us about the need for a comprehensive smoke cessation system in Ontario. Smoking is an addiction, not a lifestyle choice, and the Ontario Lung Association wants to help Ontarians struggling to overcome their addiction.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm being heckled.

From the riding of Brant, Walter Gretzky, having fought alongside his wife, Phyllis, who suffered with lung cancer, will be joining the Ontario Lung Association as their guest speaker.

Also joining us at the reception will be Dr. George Habib, the president and CEO; Mr. Kelly Munoz, the chair of the board; Dr. Hans Stelzer, the chair of the Ontario Thoracic Society; Lauren Smith, provincial manager of community giving; and Lorraine LeBlanc, a COPD ambassador, whom I encourage everyone to get to meet downstairs in the dining room from 4:30 to 6:30. Be there to learn what we can do to help people with an addiction.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE AND ELDERLY PEOPLE FROM ABUSE ACT (POWERS OF ATTORNEY), 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES CONTRE LES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS (PROCURATIONS)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to powers of attorney / Projet de loi 113, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui en ce qui a trait aux procurations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll read the preamble here:

"The bill amends sections 10 and 48 of the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 to provide that only one of the witnesses to a continuing power of attorney for property or a power of attorney for personal care may be a relative of the grantor of the power of attorney.

"The bill adds section 42.1 to the act, which requires an attorney under a continuing power of attorney for property to provide an annual accounting of information to the public guardian and trustee and, if required, to the grantor. The information includes the grantor's assets, the grantor's liabilities and the compensation taken by the attorney.

"New section 68.1 of the act requires the public guardian and trustee to establish and maintain a register of attorneys under continuing powers of attorney for property and under powers of attorney for personal care. The register contains the following information if the grantor sends it to the public guardian and trustee: the name and address of the grantor, the name, address and telephone number of the attorney, any restrictions on the attorney's authority, the date the attorney's authority took effect and the persons to whom the grantor authorizes the public guardian and trustee to disclose information. The public guardian and trustee is required, on request and payment of the fee prescribed by the regulations made under the act, to disclose the information contained in the register with respect to a power of attorney to specified members of the grantor's family and the persons authorized in the power of attorney."

I'm pleased to support this bill.

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PROTECTING EMPLOYEES' TIPS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POURBOIRE DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les pourboires et autres gratifications.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Prue: The bill prohibits employers from taking any portion of an employee's tips or other gratuities.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR PARAMEDIC BRAVERY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE PRIX DE BRAVOURE DES AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs. Van Bommel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery / Projet de loi 115, Loi prévoyant le Prix de bravoure des auxiliaires médicaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The bill creates the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.

The award is to be presented annually to paramedics such as Paul Patterson of Kerwood, Ontario, who, in the opinion of the selection committee appointed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, have performed an act of exceptional bravery to save or protect the life of another person.

An award may recognize an act of bravery that occurred when the paramedic was off duty and may be made posthumously, in certain circumstances.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM TOBACCO ADDICTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES ENFANTS CONTRE L'ACCOUTUMANCE AU TABAC

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to protect our children from tobacco addiction / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée afin de protéger nos enfants contre l'accoutumance au tabac.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: The intent of this bill is to protect young people from the dangers of nicotine addiction. We're concerned that the low price of illegal tobacco, a problem of which we are aware, is making it affordable for our young people to experiment with smoking cigarettes. Sale of these illegal cigarettes is largely in the hands of organized crime, and they are targeting our young people. Just as it is illegal for persons under the age of 19 to possess and consume alcohol, I believe the same age group should be prohibited from possessing and using tobacco products.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DU MAUVAIS TRAITEMENT DES ENFANTS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today to recognize October as Child Abuse Prevention Month and to help draw attention to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' annual purple ribbon campaign.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour rappeler qu'octobre est le Mois de la prévention du mauvais traitement des enfants et pour attirer l'attention sur la campagne du ruban violet organisée tous les ans par les sociétés d'aide à l'enfance de l'Ontario.

I thank the members of the House who are joining me in bringing awareness to this important cause today by wearing a purple ribbon. The purple ribbon campaign encourages Ontarians across Ontario to learn the signs of child abuse, and it reminds us that everyone has a duty to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

But the purple ribbon campaign also reminds us of the positive difference we can make in a child's life through our actions, because by reporting child abuse we can turn a child's life around.

As part of Child Abuse Prevention Month, the OACAS has collected success stories from children, workers and caregivers.

One girl wrote about coming home from school at age 13 to find herself and her brother abandoned by her parents. The CAS stepped in and took her and her brother into care. Her foster parents and case worker encouraged her to follow her dreams and go to university.

She writes: "If it wasn't for children's aid, I wouldn't have a place to go on Christmas or holidays, and weekly Sunday dinners. I would never have met my worker, my best friend and my family. I wouldn't be as happy and strong as I am today."

A foster mother wrote of being asked how it feels when her foster children leave. She writes: "I don't foster for my own self-worth, or not foster for fear of being hurt. I foster because every time I do, I see a positive change that can never be erased. A life lifted up."

Chaque enfant, chaque famille est unique. Certaines victimes de mauvais traitement sont retirées de leur famille et placées dans une famille d'accueil ou dans un centre de traitement spécialisé. D'autres sont adoptées ou placées dans des établissements de soins conformes aux traditions autochtones. Souvent, les enfants peuvent rester dans leur propre famille parce que la SAE est en mesure de fournir des services de soutien précoces pour que les parents puissent s'occuper de leurs enfants avec une attention et une sécurité accrues.

Each child and each family is unique. Sometimes abused children are taken from their homes and live with foster parents or in specialized treatment homes. Others

are adopted or placed in aboriginal customary care. Often, children are able to stay with their families because the CAS is able to provide early supports so that parents can better and more safely care for their kids.

In addition to the purple ribbons, children's aid societies across Ontario are busy creating public awareness about the importance of recognizing the signs of abuse and neglect, and reminding Ontarians that each and every one of us has a moral and a legal duty to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

For instance, here in Toronto, the four child welfare agencies—the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Jewish Family and Child Service, Native Child and Family Services, and Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto—have collaborated once again to launch the month with their Show You Care awareness campaign. Throughout the downtown core of the city, in numerous high-traffic public places, CAS staff and volunteers have placed over 150 donated stuffed animals, each with an identifying tag secured to it, reminding people of the importance of child abuse prevention and urging them to text or call the number on the tag to have a similar stuffed animal donated to a child in care.

CASs all across the province are running creative, innovative and informative awareness campaigns throughout October.

I would like to thank Ontario's children aid societies, their dedicated boards of directors, caregivers and compassionate staff who work every day to care for kids who need us the most.

And finally, I'd like to thank members of the public who have reported concerns to their local children's aid society.

Je veux rendre hommage aux sociétés d'aide à l'enfance de l'Ontario, aux membres de leurs conseils d'administration, aux responsables des enfants et au personnel de première ligne qui, tous les jours, s'occupent avec compassion des enfants qui ont le plus besoin de nous.

Enfin, j'aimerais aussi remercier les membres du public qui ont fait part de leurs préoccupations à la société locale de l'aide à l'enfance.

Reducing or stopping child abuse is a collective responsibility, but it is also an opportunity to make a difference. I urge all members of this House and all Ontarians to learn the signs of child abuse and neglect and to report known or suspected child abuse cases.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I rise in the House today to bring forward a timely update on how our government is transforming Ontario's economy and improving Ontarians' quality of life through record-breaking infrastructure investments.

With our partners, we've completed more than 300 infrastructure stimulus projects over the summer months. Over two years, we plan to create and support over

300,000 jobs with a record investment of about \$28 billion in infrastructure.

Prior to 2003, the simple fact was that much of our infrastructure was old, decrepit and falling apart. During the 30 years of putting things off under the watch of past governments, Ontario was creating a massive infrastructure gap.

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Five years ago, under our ReNew Ontario infrastructure plan, we dedicated more than \$30 billion to updating our schools, modernizing our hospitals, improving our water and waste water systems, expanding transit and repairing our roads and bridges. When the recession hit, we did not cut back. We did not slow down. In fact, we stepped up our infrastructure investments in Ontario communities, and as part of our Open Ontario plan we made record-breaking investments in Ontario's infrastructure in 2009-10. By March 2011, total infrastructure investment by the province since 2005-06 will have totalled approximately \$60 billion. With these investments, we are closing the infrastructure gap.

In total, there are more than 6,800 infrastructure stimulus projects. They include building or improving 230 rinks and arenas; over 500 water and waste water system improvements; close to 400 gyms and recreational centres for our Ontario families to be active; and 40 fire halls to keep Ontarians safe. Our projects at colleges and universities will create 36,000 new spaces to help Ontarians get a post-secondary education; and since taking office, we've built 18 hospitals and have 30 more projects on the way to reduce wait times for Ontario children, families and seniors.

This effort has certainly delivered needed infrastructure. It has also delivered jobs and bolstered our economy. According to the Conference Board of Canada, it added almost a full point to our GDP in 2009 alone.

We need to ensure our infrastructure continues to keep pace with Ontarians so that an open Ontario economy continues to attract new business, industries and the jobs they bring, and so that our cities and towns continue to appeal to the best and brightest. At the same time, we must be aware and respectful of our fiscal reality.

The government's Open Ontario plan demonstrates that when we invest in our infrastructure we're not just investing in bricks and mortar or roads and bridges, we're investing in our economy and in the quality of life of all Ontarians.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus to respond to the minister's statement on Child Abuse Prevention Month. There are many aspects to child abuse, but there are two things in particular that I would like to speak about today: (1) how child abuse is linked to mental health and addictions issues, and (2) how funding shortfalls at Ontario's children's aid

societies are affecting the care that vulnerable children are receiving.

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have onset during childhood or adolescence. Young people are more likely to report mental illness and/or substance use disorders than any other age group. As a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, some of the over 200 presentations we received cited a form of child abuse as a cause of mental health and addictions problems in children.

We heard from YouthLink, a charitable organization that offers a range of services that promote mental health and social well-being for vulnerable youth in Toronto. They assist youth living on the street, many of whom have suffered some form of child abuse and have since developed a mental health and/or addictions issue.

As a committee, we know that early intervention in child and youth mental health and addictions care is extremely important. That's why we presented 23 recommendations in our final report that we believe can move Ontario in the right direction. We urge the McGuinty government to implement all 23 of our recommendations.

With respect to the second issue, last year 36 children's aid societies filed for section 14 reviews, asking the government to take a closer look at their finances. They wanted this minister to understand the reality of their budgets and the difficulties they are having in delivering legislated, mandated services.

Last year, Durham CAS, which serves my riding of Whitby-Oshawa, projected a shortfall of \$4.2 million. They entered this fiscal year with a \$3.8-million deficit. Last year, they had to cut 31 positions that assist with vital child protection services. In Durham alone last year, the CAS investigated 4,180 reports of child abuse. Now, fewer people have to carry higher caseloads, impacting their ability to maintain high-quality child welfare services.

The minister repeatedly talks about how this Liberal government has increased funding for the child welfare sector, when the truth is that funding for the child welfare transformation has been cut in half.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank the organizations, their employees and volunteers, who work hard to ensure the safety of our children. Organizations like Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention, Ontario's 53 children's aid societies and the Community Child Abuse Council are all doing a wonderful job at advocating and providing help for children who are victims of abuse. For that, we thank you very much.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees: Today, we have yet one more pronouncement by a minister of a government desperate to divert attention from its record of gross mismanagement and misplaced priorities. But Ontarians won't be fooled anymore. I'm convinced that with every new

government announcement, the people of this province will simply ask themselves, "How much more will this take out of my pocket or out of my till?" and, "How much of this can I really believe?" Whether it was the \$1-billion eHealth scandal, the eco fee fiasco or the mismanagement of the multi-million-dollar 400-series highway service contract, people in this province are fed up.

Rather than seize the opportunity to invest boldly in our transportation infrastructure, this government cowered and cut its investment in what was heralded as the Big Move by \$4 billion. Rather than clear the way for critical transportation projects such as the Highway 407 east, Highway 404 north, Highways 410, 427 in the mid-peninsula corridor, this government pulled the plug on every one of those contracts. Rather than work with the private sector as key partners in renewing and building our infrastructure, it has been working overtime to create roadblocks with its steady stream of new taxes and stifling regulations.

If this minister responsible for infrastructure wants to do something to unleash investment in the province and development of infrastructure, I recommend that his next announcement should be that he appoints himself as a facilitator to level the barriers to investment and streamline the cumbersome and costly approvals process that unnecessarily adds billions of dollars to the cost of infrastructure in this province.

Finally, I can assure you, this House and the people of Ontario that a PC government will not waste its time pointing to the past. A PC government will take seriously its responsibility of leadership. It will work with the people and businesses of this province to renew and boldly build Ontario's infrastructure for the future because we know that that is the key to the economic growth and quality of life that Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Responses?

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

M^{me} France G  linas: Before I start my comments on Child Abuse Prevention Month, I have guests today who came in a little bit late, so I would like to introduce them. They are from CUPE Local 4599: Albert Cruz de Juan, Maria Cuenca, Teresita Dimaliwat and Rocklyn Pearce-Best. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would also like to thank the members of the children's aid society who are in attendance here today for the great work that they do day in and day out. Across this province last year, they investigated more than 10,000 suspected child abuse and neglect cases. Meanwhile, their agency, the children's aid society, continues to face serious financial challenges, and services are threatened due to budget deficits and inadequate funding.

Children's aid societies are desperately calling for investment from this government. Last year, 37 children's aid societies across Ontario operated under a collective deficit of \$67 million. These are serious and

startling numbers. The government doesn't seem to be taking child protection seriously.

Another form of child abuse that they're not taking seriously is the result of poverty and hunger. In 2009, 38% of food bank users were children. That is more than 140,000 children who were forced to rely on food banks, and this number has not gone down but has gone up under the McGuinty government.

This week, I took on the Put Food in the Budget challenge that was issued by the Sudbury Social Planning Council. I'm eating only the contents of the food hamper that I received at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank in my riding in Val Caron. This diet is void of anything fresh: no fruit, no vegetables, no meat, no milk—nothing fresh. It is not healthy. It is not adequate for the hundreds of thousands of children who depend on it every week.

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In this day and age, in 2010 in Ontario, how could it be that things are getting worse, not better, for children living in poverty? As a New Democrat, I believe in social justice and in sharing in prosperity, but what this Liberal government is doing is not producing results.

My colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Paul Miller, has a private member's bill that would bring back the special assistance to grandmothers who look after their foster kids that the McGuinty government has taken away. My leader has a private member's bill that would require Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies, but it's not being moved forward.

As a society, we owe it to the next generation to stop all forms of child abuse. Right now, the McGuinty government is failing in that responsibility.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: To respond to the minister for infrastructure renewal: There must be an election coming, because suddenly this government wants to announce and reannounce and reannounce, and reannounce yet again.

However, in its flurry of reannouncements, it's missing some things. I seem to remember Transit City. This government was going to make a substantial financial contribution to Transit City in Toronto, except after the election, suddenly a major portion of the money disappeared.

I sit on the public accounts committee right now, looking at the state of bridges in Ontario, and there's a big hole in this announcement today, because one of the things we find is that on a number of highways that were downloaded onto municipalities about 10 years ago, the bridges are in dire need of repair and refurbishment. In fact, there are significant safety issues, but there is no plan to provide for the refurbishment and renewal of those bridges.

Just imagine: We saw in Quebec the collapse of an overpass. In Minnesota we saw the collapse of a bridge. And this government, as it stands here today, is in fact

taking real risks, because there are not hundreds but thousands of bridges that were offloaded from the province onto municipalities. Those municipalities have no way of financing the infrastructure and this government doesn't have a plan to help them.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to consider my representation to you relating to standing order 35(a).

I know I don't have to remind you, but if I can, for the benefit of my colleagues, standing order 35(a) reads as follows: "A minister of the crown may make a short factual statement relating to government policy, ministry action or other similar matters of which the House should be informed."

I listened with great interest to the statement made by the Minister of Infrastructure. Specifically, I'm going to draw your attention—I would ask you, actually, to please read Hansard and consider the statement that the minister made. I think you may concur with me that much of the statement and the figures that were included in that statement were not factual. They were either projections—certainly, one case was, in fact, and I have to be careful how I say this, it was not fact. In fact, it was contrary to the fact.

I will read from the minister's statement. He said: "When the recession hit, we did not cut back. We did not slow down. In fact, we stepped up our infrastructure investments in Ontario communities..."

Mr. Speaker, you know full well, and we heard the Minister of Transportation and the former Minister of Infrastructure in this House many times, repeatedly, say that they slowed down their investment in Metrolinx to the tune of \$4 billion. They changed the entire schedule of investment, of infrastructure, through that period of time.

I'm concerned about a ministerial statement that essentially is not a factual statement but that is, perhaps, if I can use the term lightly, propaganda at best.

I'd like to also refer to standing order—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, thank you.

I'd like to also refer to standing order 35(c), which states that: "Two copies of each ministerial statement shall be delivered to the leaders of recognized opposition parties, or their representatives, at or before the time the statement is made in the House."

This statement to which I, as critic, was expected to respond was found on my desk when I came in here. For us to be expected to adequately respond to a ministerial statement without proper notice is, I believe, just simply not appropriate. It's certainly not respectful of members of this House.

I realize that the standing order clearly allows the minister the right to withhold that statement until the time that he actually makes it. I would suggest, however, that the standing order allows the minister to make that

information available before he makes the statement, and it would be appropriate and respectful if the minister would do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora for his point of order.

I'll start with the timing of the delivery. There was compliance with the standing orders. I certainly would encourage, at any time, any minister who is delivering a statement, if at all possible, to deliver their statement earlier so that the members could have some advance notice, but it was in compliance with the standing orders.

I would say as well, if the member is concerned about that particular standing order, it may be something that he would ask his members who sit on the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly to take up and review at a standing committee meeting.

As well, I would remind all members in this regard that it is not for the Speaker to determine the veracity, the factuality or the correctness of any statements made. It is my role to ensure that all honourable members are taken at their word. If the honourable member takes exception to comments that were made, I would say to him that the ideal time for him to have taken exception to them was during the five-minute response that is allocated.

With that, we will move to petitions.

PETITIONS

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: For the 61st time and at 25,000 names, here I go again:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients.... ; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Brigid.

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KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Thomas.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly relating to the funding and approval for CCSVI diagnosis and treatment.

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people diagnosed with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition, having many constituents in the same situation as many MS patients across the province.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from all over Ontario, actually.

"Whereas a company's resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike" or a lockout "puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Anika.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Again, I want to thank a constituent in the Peterborough riding, Ken Sharp, for providing me with these petitions. He's a person who's on dialysis.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ioana.

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition that was brought to my attention and drafted by Simone Clarkson. It reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontario parents and families have suffered a miscarriage, a stillbirth or the death of an infant during delivery or shortly after birth; and

"Whereas those parents and families deserve and require support and understanding during their time of grief; and

"Whereas promoting awareness of the challenges faced by those parents and families is a positive means of establishing support," understanding "and healing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To declare October 15 as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day throughout Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to page Audrey on her second-last day here at Queen's Park.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Windsor, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws” have existed “in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with Caelan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I have literally hundreds of petitions presented to me by RAIN, Representing Animals in Need. It reads as follows:

“Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park ... which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature in support of these petitions.

SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai cette pétition des gens de Sudbury :

« Attendu que l’Ontario fait de la tomographie par émission de positons ... un service de santé assuré par le régime public pour les patients atteints du cancer et de maladies cardiaques...;

« Attendu que » depuis le mois d’ « octobre 2009 », des TEP sont assurées et « effectuées à Ottawa, à London, à Toronto, à Hamilton ainsi qu’à Thunder Bay; et

« Attendu que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le nord-est, qui compte l’Hôpital régional de Sudbury et son programme régional de cancer », ainsi « que l’École de médecine du Nord de l’Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario d’offrir de la TEP par le biais de l’Hôpital régional de Sudbury, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est ontarien. »

J’appuie cette pétition et je demande à Emily de l’apporter aux greffiers.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Mr. Hopkins of 884 Stewart Line in Peterborough for sending me this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with this petition. It has been certified, and I will give it to page Caelan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition that’s about a suggestion in Bill 150: the separation of the functions of charities as well as animal shelters and the OSPCA. The petition reads as follows:

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"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been" executed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and to present it to Emily, one of the pages, on her second-last day here at Queen's Park.

OPPOSITION DAY

HEALTH CARE SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to prohibit all hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly. Addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. Debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Today is a rare occasion: an opposition day motion that all three parties support, at least in principle. We all agree that hospitals using taxpayers' money to hire lobbyists to lobby the government for more taxpayers' money is simply absurd. What remains to be seen is whether the government members will be allowed to vote to stop hospitals from hiring lobbyists, or will they just play politics?

You see, we know the government supports this motion, because when it was faced with mounting evidence that hospitals are employing Liberal-friendly lobbyists and consulting firms to do their lobbying, the McGuinty Liberals said that the practice is wrong and would end.

The health minister said, "It is not okay with our government to use taxpayers' dollars to lobby government—that just doesn't make sense. I am completely supportive of the notion that it is not all right."

The Premier himself said, "It is unacceptable in Ontario today for hospital administration to employ lobbyists to try to influence our government."

Despite these statements, we are less certain that the Liberals will vote for a motion that will stop hospitals from using taxpayers' money to hire lobbyists to lobby for more taxpayers' money. Why is that? Well, because when the Ontario PCs brought in the Truth in Government bill in May, the Liberals voted against it. When the Ontario PCs called for more transparency and accountability by making all agencies, boards and commissions subject to freedom-of-information requests, the Liberals—well, they voted against it. When the Ontario PCs called on hospitals to disclose their expenses, the Liberals—you guessed—voted against it. And when the Ontario PCs called for disclosure of job reclassifications in contracts and grants over \$10,000 at provincial public sector bodies, the Liberals—well, once again, they voted against it.

Now they're changing their tune, and we have to ask whether that is because the Auditor General is about to release a report into his investigation into the use of consultants at the LHINs, the Ministry of Health and hospitals across Ontario. Suddenly, the government is looking for a way to act like it supports accountability, but we've all seen this movie before. It was one year ago that the Auditor General revealed that \$1 billion had been wasted at eHealth Ontario on Liberal-friendly consultants from the Courtyard Group, Accenture and Anzen.

The eHealth architect, George Smitherman, stayed in cabinet while leaving the member from Don Valley East to resign as health minister following news of the eHealth scandal.

One year ago this month, the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, called for a public inquiry into the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle. Today, we're still waiting for that inquiry.

Yesterday we revealed that eHealth spent another \$343 million in the last year, hired yet another principal from the Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group, and we still don't have a working eHealth system here in Ontario.

So I bring this motion on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus, a motion to bring accountability into health care and to make sure that every dollar we spend goes to front-line patient care, where it belongs.

The government says it is against hospitals using taxpayers' money to hire lobbyists, yet under its watch the same players who ran up a billion-dollar tab in eHealth, the Courtyard Group, have done work with the

University Health Network, Kingston hospital and hospitals in Mississauga and West Toronto.

Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga spent \$80,000 to hire lobbyists, Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital spent \$35,000 on lobbyists, and the William Osler Health Centre serving Brampton spent nearly \$78,000 on lobbyists. In fact, according to media reports this week, 14 hospitals across Ontario spent money intended for front-line care on lobbyists.

I ask you and the people of Ontario a simple question: Wouldn't it be great if just once this Liberal government would address a problem before the Ombudsman or the Auditor General tells them they have to? But that's simply not the Liberal way. The Liberal way is to let unaccountable and unelected bureaucracies go wild, waste millions, even a billion dollars, on consultants, get caught and then issue a mea culpa, saying, "Oh, gee, I'm sorry. We'll do better next time."

For many Ontarians stretched to the limit through HST, eco taxes, fees and skyrocketing hydro bills, doing better has to start today. That is why the Ontario PC caucus is proposing a better way, so that when Ontarians go to the ballot box one year from today, they will know they have a clear choice: a choice between the Dalton McGuinty Liberals who take from Ontario families and squander valuable health care dollars on Liberal-friendly consultants at eHealth, the LHINs and now hospitals, or an Ontario PC government and our leader, Tim Hudak, who will put health care dollars where they belong, into front-line patient care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't know whether the Liberals are going to support this resolution. I heard some talk that they might. That made me reconsider whether or not the New Democrats should be supporting it. But I can tell you, without having heard from the Liberals, New Democrats, of course, support this proposition put forward here in the House today.

The NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, has been in this Legislature since Monday raising the issue in question period, confronting Premier McGuinty about his endorsement of public funds being used by hospitals, municipalities and colleges and universities to lobby with this government—and almost inevitably, to almost the final lobbyist, it ends up being well-connected former Liberal staffers, or at the very least, kissing cousins. Remarkable.

Let's canvass some of the taxpayers' dollars that are being spent on lobbying.

Let's understand what lobbying means. Lobbying means some fine wining and dining, maybe down at the Harbour Sixty Steakhouse, the notorious one where coked-up former members of Parliament meet ladies of the night along with various wheeler-dealers.

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The Ontario College of Art and Design: StrategyCorp, \$54,000. Laurentian University, \$102,000; York University, \$31,500, \$271,000 and \$189,000, when your kids

are facing the highest tuitions in all of Canada and tuition rates are increasing—exploding—year after year. Wilfrid Laurier, \$69,000.

They're paying this money to lobbyists to massage and wheel and deal with the government, presumably to get access to ministers: Lambton College, \$54,000; Mohawk College, \$31,000; University of Ontario Institute of Technology—that's the one over in Oshawa—\$130,000. George Brown College is in on the action too, with Capital Hill Group, but they wouldn't disclose how much money they spent on lobbyists. You can draw the inference that you might from their refusal to disclose that it was an embarrassingly large amount.

Municipalities—this again boggles the mind. The city of Brampton: Capital Hill Group, \$129,000. The town of Tecumseh: StrategyCorp, \$25,000. Durham region, \$23,000. Durham region has a couple of MPPs here in this Legislature who, as opposition members, are far more effective than government backbenchers. Mind you, they're not going to argue that during the next election campaign, because they will aspire to be government. The opposition members from the Durham area are going to be telling their voters that they need somebody who's in government. Last time around they were telling their voters that they could be more effective in opposition. But I tell you, Durham's got some very effective MPPs here—opposition members—yet Durham region blows \$23,000 of taxpayers' money on lobbyists.

The city of Niagara Falls—I used to be a city councillor in Welland a long, long time ago. For the life of me, what is the matter with these municipalities? What is the matter with them? What is the matter with city hall in Niagara Falls when it's got a huge staff component? They've got CAOs and CEOs and who knows what other initials. They've got high-priced staff up the yingyang. They've got people who are supposed to know how to form relationships with the bureaucrats, ADMs and DMs, here at Queen's Park, yet the city of Niagara Falls—I don't know what Mayor Salci's got to say about this, because Lord knows he's up here often enough on the taxpayers' tab.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Please, Ms. Elliott. It's not a funny matter. This is deadly serious.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Like the Speaker, I remind the member for Welland that we don't use names; we use positions and ridings.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly.

Member for Whitby—Oshawa, this is a serious matter.

Ted Salci: I don't think he takes the train; he doesn't take Coach Canada, I'm pretty sure. I've never seen him at the bus station, at least not for the purpose of using one.

Salci's up here from time to time. For the life of me, why is Niagara Falls spending their hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to the tune of \$102,000, and more so, why is the government accommodating it?

The town of Oakville—the poor little town of Oakville—\$9,000. Poor, my foot, but obviously the folks in

Oakville—if you're going to spend \$9,000, why spend anything at all? What is the matter with city hall in Oakville? What's the matter with them that they would even spend \$9,000? They've got senior staff there who are experienced, who have worked with governments of all political stripes, who have worked with civil servants. And when push comes to shove, surely their MPP could arrange for a lunch, a dinner, perhaps a musical downtown with the minister and two or three of his or her staff.

Hospitals: This is probably the one that really rots your socks; this is the one that drives you right crazy. While this government is shutting down emergency rooms, while hospital services are being cut back, while waiting lists are as long as ever, at least down where I come from and in the experience of the folks I talk to—hospitals, wow. Credit Valley Hospital, an \$80,000 contract with StrategyCorp; Tillsonburg, a small community—I know Tillsonburg, I know those folks down there—another \$35,000; William Osler, \$77,000. Do you know what the other interesting thing is? These are the same hospitals that have those grossly high-priced CEOs and top dogs.

You're talking about six-digit-income people—and it's not like \$101,000; it's more like \$201,000 or \$301,000—hospital top dogs who are among some of the best-paid officials in the province of Ontario.

Poor little Tillsonburg spending \$35,000 with Strategy Corp.; William Osler, \$77,000. Oh, my. It's just amazing. The fact is that the government now and the Minister of Health—you see, the fact that it's the Minister of Health who makes this announcement to the press, to the media, saying they're going to do something about it, perhaps—I don't know what they're going to do. We don't know because they haven't stated it explicitly. But they're going to do something. Who knows? At least they had the media release. They're trying to do some damage control. That's what they've done so far.

So maybe the Minister of Health—I don't know what she's doing, but we haven't heard from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we haven't heard from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We have heard from taxpayers across this province who find that this kind of exploitation of taxpayers' dollars is outrageous. One, it's inevitably Liberal insiders who are the paid lobbyists and who are no doubt touting their services, convincing municipalities—and again, for the life of me, when you look at some of these municipalities like Niagara Falls, how could they be so naive to buy into this? How could these high-priced CEOs be so naive, unless—think about this—it's all part of a quid pro quo system, a wink-wink, nudge-nudge, “I'm talking care of your guy,” in other words, your former Liberal staffer. “Does that buy me,” as a hospital or a municipality or as a college or university, “some largesse from this government?” I don't know. I'm not saying it does, although I'm saying that question certainly begs to be asked; doesn't it? That's one of the inferences that could obviously be drawn by any rational person.

What we want is for this government to state clearly that public funds—there should be no publicly funded institution hiring any lobbyist to lobby with this government, bar none, across the board; prohibited, forbidden. That legislation could happen very easily, very quickly, but that's not what we're going to see forthcoming and that's not what anybody from the government side has even dared mention.

Gosh, I note that the resolution makes reference to LHINs. It's my view and my view only—I'm not sure if my colleagues in the NDP necessarily agree, but as far as I'm concerned we shouldn't have to worry about LHINs hiring lobbyists because we should simply abolish them. Hospital boards, I don't know. You know I've always been an advocate of publicly elected hospital boards. I can't understand, for the life of me, why we have that largest single expenditure of health care dollars in our given municipalities, yet those hospital boards are little backroom cabals, little secret clubs, skull-and-dagger-type operations, that operate behind a veil of secrecy in the darkness of privacy and with no public scrutiny and no public accountability.

I've had private member's bills here before in this Legislature that call for publicly elected hospital boards. We could be doing it right now as we elect municipal councils and school board trustees—very easily done. Oh, but the criticism. What's the phrase? We need skills-based boards. That's wink-wink, nudge-nudge for “The board will decide who is going to be on it.” They'll do their own little recruitment process.

For the life of me, I don't hear anybody talking about skills-based Parliaments. Think about it. Whoever gets the most votes gets elected to Parliament, regardless of what their skill set happens to be. We don't have skills-based city councils. Why, maybe the people who advocate skills-based hospital boards—which means they're unelected—are advocating city councils should have the right to select the next two new members based on whatever skill set the majority of that council wants to see on their particular council. That's not democracy, and it's not accountability, and it's not transparency.

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I should mention that the other day, Saturday, I was in the market with Malcolm Allen and Peggy Allen, Malcolm's wife, and after doing the market out there, we went over to the Fireside on Southworth Street and had breakfast there. Charlie came out of the kitchen. He had cooked our breakfast, and he was very gracious and sat down with us. Charlie and Mary, his wife—Mary was upstairs; she wasn't feeling quite well that day—had come to Canada in 1958 and settled over in the Ossington and Bloor area, which is where their daughter Sophie was born. Of course, she's now the Minister of Revenue. But Charlie was so gracious, and, by God, if it wasn't 11:30 by the time we had finished our breakfast and Charlie treated us to a round of ouzo. As I say, the clock had struck 11:30, so we were fine; we were legal. But Charlie was just so gracious.

And I don't know—I didn't ask Charlie Aggelonitis about this proposition, but I've got a feeling that when a

hard-working guy like Charlie Aggelonitis and his wife, Mary, read the news about hospitals and city councils and colleges and universities using these huge sums of money to lobby the government when they could have—I mean, if any one of them went to the Fireside, Charlie or Mary would call up their daughter on the phone, on her cell, and say, “Hey, these people need access to the government.” They don’t need lobbyists. What the heck’s the matter with them? They’ve got Charlie and Mary to lobby for them, if need be, at least folks down in Welland.

As I say, I didn’t speak about this with them, because we didn’t start this particular campaign until Monday, this exposure of the gross rip-offs of public funds. But I’ve got a feeling that hard-working people like Charlie and Mary Aggelonitis would shake their heads in dismay at the expenditure of public monies on lobbyists in this way, just shake their heads, because they’d have Sophie on the cellphone in a New York minute if anybody was in their restaurant eating some mighty fine sausage and eggs and a side order—I get a side order of feta cheese, because if you’re in a Greek restaurant, you’ve got to get that with your breakfast; or for the hot beef sandwich I had the Saturday before, gravy on everything, of course, which Mary had made in the kitchen. I regret not having—I was under the impression that she wasn’t there. The serving woman didn’t indicate that Mary was there or I would have stuck my head in and said howdy.

So we support this resolution. We’re fearful that the government may say all the right things, but at the end of the day do none of the right things to address this disgraceful, shabby scenario. People are shocked. People are awed and shocked by these revelations that Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have been making over the course of this week.

But look, the problem the government has really is about having 86% of Ontarians say that they’re worse off now than they were two years ago—that’s the real problem—and 76% of Ontarians saying that they want to see another party in power. Holy moly. If you think that there’s maybe, on a good day, a 60% voter turnout—I don’t know; the people who do these stats know better than I do. So 60% of 24% is around 14%. That could leave the Liberals with 14% of the popular vote come October of next year. Hmm. I don’t know which of my friends I’ll see here in opposition, then, after the next election. It’s a tough one. It’s tight, it’s really tight: 76% of Ontarians say that they want to see another party in power. Now, there could be a margin of error of, let’s say, four points, so it could only be 72%, but think about it: It could also, then, be 80%, because that margin of error works both ways. Hmm.

Almost 86% of Ontarians say that it’s harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, and when they see their tax dollars being spent on cigar-smoking, Rolex-wearing, Prada-shoed, Montblanc-writing lobbyists, wearing \$3,000 suits from who knows where—from Harry Rosen, I suppose, because that’s where lobbyists buy suits. I don’t know; I’ve been past there a couple of

times. It’s just not my style. Or maybe Holt Renfrew—yeah, what the heck; drop in at Holt’s.

When taxpayers who already know that they’re being squeezed learn, as they have over the last three days, about this gross misuse of public funds and about the fact that this government has endorsed it, entertained it, accommodated it—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Take that back.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There’s howling coming from the government benches—literal howling and squealing. I understand why. It’s one of those matters of, “Nurse, administer some novocaine. We’ve hit a nerve.”

Seven years in power—we’ve got the most recent numbers, and there’s nothing to suggest that this hasn’t been going on for seven years. And it is Liberal lobbyists, by and large. It is former Liberal staffers. Connect the dots. Draw the logical inferences, because the taxpayers are going to, the residents of Ontario are going to.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Only if you keep fibbing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Research and Innovation may want to consider withdrawing that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw it, Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

So there we are. We’re supporting the resolution; let’s see if the Liberals do. But far more important—they’re the government—let them legislate a complete prohibition, an absolute ban, on publicly funded institutions: schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, municipalities, and half a dozen other institutions. Prohibit them from using their funding to hire lobbyists to work with this government, or any other, for that matter.

Ms. Gélinas will be speaking to this bill, of course—I’m sorry; the member for—it’s hard to overcome long-held habits, but I’m trying. I’m doing my best, Speaker. I’m trying really, really, really, really hard. I’ve got perspiration, I’m trying so hard. The member for Nickel Belt is going to be speaking to this resolution in due course. I want people to listen to the wise things that she has to say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I’m pleased to have just a few minutes to speak to the opposition motion today.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa and I shared a boundary on our ridings until the redistribution in the last election. Now our riding boundaries are separated a little bit more, but we still share a lot in common, in the context of health care in our communities. Certainly we’re well aware of the work that is being done by the Rouge Valley Health System, and I know how desperately she would like to see the Whitby hospital reopen to its fullest extent. She spoke to that before. That was a dire situation that occurred some years ago under a former government, when they closed that hospital during one of the mandates. So I know she brings forward an opposition resolution with all the best intentions.

I know that during the course of our debate we’re going to hear lots of rhetoric today, particularly from the

opposition benches, about how terrible things are. But I think sometimes we need to get a little bit of context in where we were on some issues, so that when people are looking and listening and hearing, they can see the fuller picture.

My predecessor in this office was a minister of the government of the day, the Ernie Eves government at that time, as the Minister of Finance. I'm sure it wasn't her idea that she be put in a position of having to take her budget to Magna, but she did, and I think that was certainly under a direction from the Premier of the day. I expect he got some advice from his predecessor, the past Premier at that time, Mike Harris. I think Mike Harris gave Ernie Eves some advice about where to hold the budget, and I think Janet Ecker was a pawn in that regard, so she was forced to take it to Magna. I know in my heart of hearts that the former member from Whitby-Oshawa would never have taken his budget to the Magna headquarters. I know that he would have stood up to Ernie Eves and Mike Harris and said, "That's not the way we should spend public dollars." But the reality is, that party, members on that side who were there then, sided with their then Premier and allowed that budget to be taken out to Magna.

Let me just give you some context, when we talk about consultants' expenditures and all those kinds of things, about the kind of money that was being expended at that point in time on one event, so that we have the context when they stand up and rail against what's happening in health care in some venues.

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Some \$98,500 went to a private production company for putting this show on. It was a show. That included necessary costs, because when you put a show on at Magna, you have to have makeup artists. So, that included makeup artists for the Premier and the then-finance minister, who was forced in that situation.

Interjection: Make up for a finance minister?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Yes, and the Premier.

There was some \$3,200 for 35 dozen cookies and rental chairs and coat hangers, just about \$25,000 to a Tory party strategist, Scott Munnoch, as the project manager for that little event. And we know the outcome of that event; we know what happened in this place following that. That doesn't include the about \$3,700 for tea and cookies for those invited guests who were allowed to see the budget from select locations around the province.

We're going to hear a lot today about what is happening with the consultants and the like. Let's remember, though, the context of where we were not all that long ago.

I think we're going to hear a lot on this side about the need for the kind of restraint that the member opposite is talking about. I'm not convinced that it's articulated as fully as it could be, and I'm certainly not necessarily convinced that there's not more we can do in this regard yet.

I'm anxiously looking forward to the opportunity for members on our side to speak to the opposition day

motion. I'm particularly interested in the kinds of things we can do to ensure that every tax dollar that needs to go to health care for the purpose of providing health care to patients ends up in that location. That's my particular concern, and I'm looking forward to debate around that. But I'd like people to keep the context, as we hear the rhetoric about what has been happening, about where we've been, not just where we might be today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Speaker: I'm listening to the member for Pickering-Scarborough East, and I fail to connect what he's saying with the motion that's before the House. Would you rule on that?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): If the member listens carefully, he may hear some connection between the two.

The member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the interjection from the member opposite, the point being that we're talking about expenditures on consultants, and in this instance we're talking about expenditures on the opposition side, particularly as it relates to hospitals today. I was trying to point out that we need that kind of balance to understand where expenditures were made in the past.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on the motion that has been put forward by my colleague, the deputy leader of the PC Party, health critic and member for Whitby-Oshawa. I want to congratulate her on her excellent remarks, and I also obviously want to congratulate our leader and party for having identified the fact that we have a huge problem in the province of Ontario when it comes to lobbying. We've certainly seen lobbyists run rampant under this Liberal government, and for the past few years we have been emphasizing the need for this government to recognize that there is a need for accountability and there is a need for transparency. Although they say they're getting it, we still haven't seen any evidence of the fact that they are going to take any decisive action.

What this motion does is call upon the government to prohibit all hospitals; all local health integration networks, more commonly referred to as LHINs; community care access centres, more commonly referred to as CCACs; Cancer Care Ontario; eHealth Ontario; and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospital expenses publicly.

The problem we find in the province today is that despite the efforts of our party to point out the misuse of public funds, this government has refused to take action to ensure that taxpayer money is not being spent for lobbying.

I think my colleague asked the question as to whether or not the government today is going to support our motion. If they don't, then, obviously, everything that the Premier and the Minister of Health have been saying about promising to crack down on the use of lobbyists, saying that, yes, they understand our concerns about

scarce health care dollars being wasted on trying to influence the government—despite all the words and all the rhetoric, nothing is going to change.

In fact, the Premier said that he condemned the practice, but again, he has not indicated what he is prepared to do about it. He has known about this for a long, long time now, because we identified this problem with eHealth. We identified the fact that there was a \$1-billion boondoggle, with a tremendous amount of money having been wasted and spent on lobbyists. That happened during Health Minister Smitherman's term, and, of course, it continued in Mr. Caplan's term. Nothing has changed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd just remind the members that we use positions and ridings when we refer to members. Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that reminder.

I think it's really important to note, then, that despite what we hear from the Minister of Health, despite what we hear from the Premier about getting it and understanding, there's a problem: They have still not done anything or taken any decisive, concrete action on their long-overdue promise to act.

So we find ourselves here today, and we have learned about the fact that there were 14 hospitals that have hired lobbyists. We see that Mississauga's Credit Valley spent \$80,000; Brampton's William Osler, \$78,000; and, of course, Tillsonburg, \$35,000.

Most of these lobbyists, when we take a look at the firms, are Liberal-friendly firms. So, again, this has certainly enabled the supporters of Liberal government to be the beneficiaries of many, many dollars which really should have been diverted to pay for doctors. We still have a tremendous shortage of doctors in the province of Ontario. In fact, our Vital Signs report that was released in Waterloo region this week indicated one of the big problems facing our region is the lack of access to family doctors.

The other very shocking statistic, but one that certainly we've known is there, is that we now have about 2,000 people on a waiting list for long-term-care beds. Of course, the whole problem of the number of people waiting for long-term-care beds is worsening year by year because this government has no plan.

The money that is going into paying for lobbyists, which is public dollars, taxpayer dollars, should instead be spent by this government on making sure that people have access to doctors, that they have access to long-term-care beds, that they have the appropriate community services in place.

Today, we will discover whether or not this Premier, this health minister and this government are really serious about making sure that tax dollars go into front-line health services for patients or whether they are going to allow this situation to continue in the province of Ontario without taking any action.

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Today, we will see what's going to happen. They have a choice to make. I think people in the province of

Ontario recognize that there is a choice. In fact, if today they see that this government doesn't support the motion that has been put forward by my colleague, our deputy leader and the member from Whitby—Oshawa, they will know that, a year from today, they will have a choice. They can either vote for the government that is squandering precious health care dollars and not investing in front-line care, but instead on friendly consultants at eHealth or at the LHINs or at the hospitals or Cancer Care, or they can vote for the Progressive Conservative government and our leader, Tim Hudak, because we have made a commitment. In fact, that commitment was made when we uncovered the \$1-billion boondoggle at eHealth. We will take all precious health dollars and we will invest them into front-line patient care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and speak on this motion. I think it's an important issue to talk about. Of course, I support the essence of the motion because, as has been mentioned by our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and our Premier, it's not acceptable to allow lobbyists to use taxpayers' money at the expense of the taxpayers. It's unethical; it's not correct; it's not right.

That's why we are in great support of heavier and stronger legislation to come to this place to outline those issues and also to protect the taxpayers' money, because we're not going to stand up and support a motion—just talk for the sake of talk. We want some kind of law and regulations to be put in place to manage and organize the taxpayers' money, because it's very important for all of us.

No one from anywhere in the province of Ontario wants his or her taxpayer's money to be invested to get taxpayers' money. Also, those people who are making the money, the lobbyists, enjoy it at the expense of taxpayers. Those taxpayers work very hard to save those dollars and to give those dollars to the government to be invested in health care, education, infrastructure and communities. That's where we want this money to go, not to a lobbyist.

That's why our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is coming out with a strategy, coming out with strong legislation to manage this practice in the province of Ontario. This will be the first time ever in this province that we'll introduce a bill to manage those exercises.

We have to talk about the opposition party which brought this motion to the House. I was listening to the member from Newmarket—Aurora. He said, "Don't judge me on my past." The people of Ontario cannot judge the Conservative Party on their past? Because when they were in government, there were lobbyists all over the place. We have a full record, sheet after sheet, talking about ex-MPPs or ex-ministers who used to come, day and night, and lobby ministers and get contracts.

Not a long time ago—I was watching the news this morning—a lobbyist from Quebec, actually not a

registered lobbyist, convinced the minister of infrastructure for the federal government to get the contract to fix the House of Commons, a \$1-billion contract, and he got more than \$400,000 as his fee. He was not registered as a lobbyist.

That party has a great record of allowing people to come and benefit from the friendly environment, from friendship with ministers in power, when they were in government, to give them contracts at the expense of taxpayers.

I listened carefully to both speakers from the opposition party speaking about our record on this side. We are saying to all the people of Ontario that we are on the side of the taxpayers. We want to organize this exercise, because it's not acceptable to allow lobbyists using taxpayers' money to come lobby us, because we believe that as elected officials we are the original lobbyists. We were elected to lobby on behalf of the people of Ontario. We are lobbyists on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's what we, when we ran for office, decided to do: to come to this place to speak on their behalf, to advocate on their behalf, to deal with their issues, whether health care, education, infrastructure or community issues. That's our job. We are the lobbyists on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's what we get paid to do, that's what we run for and that's what we get elected to do.

In my riding of London—Fanshawe, on a regular basis, with my colleagues Deb Matthews and Chris Bentley, we meet with the hospital boards to address their issues and listen to their concerns; we meet with the education boards to listen to their concerns and to be advocates on their behalf; to listen to the community leaders and the many stakeholders who come to our offices without any lobbyists to explain to us what they want. As elected officials, we consider ourselves working for them. We are the workers of the people of Ontario.

Also, when we have an issue, we don't have to go anywhere else—a hotel or a lobby room—to do business. They can come to this place. We have a lot of offices in this place, because we consider this place the place of the people. It's the people's place. People can come to it any time, can talk to us any time. They can also meet with a minister any time to deal with their issues, to listen to their concerns. We've been open about it since we got elected in 2003. We don't hide anything. We're an open government. We meet with the people on a regular basis. We invite the people to come here. We organize meetings with the ministers, with the Premier, with everyone on our side to meet with the stakeholders, to meet with the hospital people, to meet with education people, to meet with infrastructure people to address their concerns directly without any lobbying, without any intervening from the third party, because we believe we are working for the people.

I guess I want to leave some time to my colleagues, my friends, to speak to this issue, because this issue is very important to every one of us in this House, not just to me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise and participate in this debate. As the orders of the day state:

"Mrs. Elliott—That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to prohibit all hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly."

This is just a common sense request of the Legislature to enact this requirement. I think the people in our ridings would expect that this would already be the case. I'm sure that many people, when they realize that their hospital, their health care facility, their community care access centre or their LHIN may well be taking scarce health care dollars and using those to hire a lobbyist to help them convince the Ministry of Health that they need more money, are going to put their hands up high and say, "Please stop the madness." That's what my colleague is attempting to do by bringing this resolution forward.

I want to, before I go on, provide the Legislature with a clarification. I know that my colleagues in the New Democratic Party recently issued a list of organizations that are publicly funded and that employ lobbyists for the purpose, I believe well intended, of letting people know who some of those organizations are. Unfortunately, that list published by the NDP included the Vaughan Health Campus of Care. I want to clarify that the Vaughan campus of care is not a publicly funded organization; it is not an organization of the government. It is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that is seeking to build a hospital in Vaughan. That is a very different set of circumstances. I believe, in fact, that that organization doesn't have anyone but local community members who are dedicating a great deal of their time—personal volunteer time—to this cause. They have taken it upon themselves, through private dollars, to hire a lobbyist to help them convince this government of the need for a hospital in Vaughan.

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I believe the fact that this motion is before us today speaks to a far greater underlying problem that we have in the government of Ontario and in fact in this Legislature, and that is that the role of the MPP has been undermined to the point where, quite frankly, people feel they have to go beyond us to lobbyists who have greater access to the Premier or to ministers than members of this Legislature do.

That is fundamentally wrong. Anyone should be able to come to their member of provincial Parliament and expect that they will be heard. Unfortunately, what happens all too often is that when we, as members of the Legislature, write to a minister of the crown, appeal to the minister of the crown, we don't get our calls returned. We don't get the kinds of results that, unfortunately, lobbyists often get because they happen to know someone personally; they happen to have the access. And that's wrong.

I believe what we really do need is a reform of this place and a reform of how ministers of the crown do their business, and it begins with respect for the roles that we play here as members of the provincial Legislature. Then, quite frankly, the Vaughan campus of care wouldn't have to hire the lobbyists. They could go to their local MPP, Peter Shurman, the member from Thornhill, and say, "Here is what we would like to do to have the message get through to the minister," and he would be treated with respect.

I'm glad that I was able to make that clarification on behalf of the Vaughan campus of care. I was asked to do so by my colleague the member from Thornhill.

I trust, as this debate goes on, that we remain focused on what the key issue is here, and that is an unresponsive government. That is why people across all sectors, not just health care, have felt that they had to resort to hiring the friends of this Liberal government to get them access to decisions that take place in ministers' offices.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm happy to support the opposition day motion today that calls on this government to prohibit all hospitals, LHINs, CCACs, Cancer Care Ontario and eHealth, in addition to any other publicly funded health care bodies, from hiring consultants to lobby government officials. Additionally, we are calling on the government to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly.

I know that Ontarians across this province agree when I say that our health care dollars cannot afford to be wasted. Sadly, this government does not have a good track record when it comes to ensuring this.

Today, 46 cents of every dollar spent on provincial government programs is spent on health care. If this growth in health care spending is left not properly managed and unchecked, this amount could rise to 70 cents by the year 2022. Even the McGuinty Liberals acknowledge that this is not sustainable and tried to provide for some solutions in their most recent budget.

This is fine and good, but they omit mentioning having mismanaged spending because they have failed to properly oversee their agencies' expenses and fees paid to the long list of consultants that are contracted with this government.

Just recently, we learned that hospitals have been hiring lobbyists to try and influence these government officials to advance projects. This is totally unacceptable. At least 14 hospitals were found to have firms registered on the province's list of lobbyists. Although we don't know the final costs, we do know that Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital spent about \$80,000, William Osler Health System spent about \$78,000, and Tillsonburg, a little hospital, spent about \$35,000. These are some of the same hospitals that had to make cutbacks for services such as operating room services, emergency services, physiotherapy and dietitian services. However, they still felt the need to hire lobbyists to further their

communication and to access these government officials. That money could have gone to a long list of things, such as additional front-line care. Why couldn't hospital administrators just pick up the phone if they wanted to talk to government officials?

The McGuinty Liberals have said that they are looking into ways to stop hospitals from hiring lobbyists, and that some hospitals have already been spoken with. However, this doesn't go far enough. This government has made itself so remote, so out of touch, that they are forcing hospitals, universities and others to hire professional lobbyists in order to reach the ministers and their staff. Let's be clear: We're talking about public officials trying to talk to public officials.

And you know what? The ministers and their staff knew they were meeting with lobbyists. This wasn't just some new surprise to this government. They knew, and they did nothing about it until it was made public. Why didn't they stop this practice long before it was exposed? That is the way this government works. They only ever make changes once their scandals are exposed. This is a track record of this government and a pattern they have formed. As usual, the McGuinty Liberals are moving at a turtle's pace in stopping public bodies from hiring lobbyists to meet with government officials.

This is a government that never seems to learn. Under the McGuinty Liberal watch we seem to see one health care spending scandal followed by another, including the mismanagement at eHealth Ontario, Cancer Care Ontario and, most recently, the LHINs. Each time the McGuinty Liberals say that changes are on the way, but with each new scandal that hope begins to diminish.

This government has become very good at keeping their agencies away from public scrutiny. What are they hiding? It wasn't until the billion-dollar eHealth scandal was exposed that the McGuinty Liberals finally agreed to make health agencies like Cancer Care Ontario subject to freedom of information. We have learned from experience that if this government can hide mismanaged spending, they will.

Evidently this government has some major oversight problems, and it is time that they got serious about the wasted health care dollars. If this government is serious—really serious—about making our health care system more accountable, more transparent, they will be voting in favour of this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my voice to the opposition motion that the member from Whitby-Oshawa has brought forward: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls on the government to prohibit all hospitals, local health integration networks, community care access centres, Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario and other publicly funded health care bodies from hiring consultants to lobby government officials, and to require all publicly funded health care bodies to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly."

The motion is quite simple, and I think it is something that everybody can agree to. The mere fact that we

presently have in Ontario a government that funds transfer payments to agencies such as hospitals—we all have hospitals in our communities and we all know the important role that they play. Those hospitals have found it worthwhile to invest scarce dollars into paying lobbyists that are connected to the McGuinty Liberals. Why are they doing this? They're doing this because it is an investment that pays dividends. They're doing this because if they give money to people who are close friends with the Liberals, their agency gets something in return. This completely flies in the face of a democracy. This completely flies in the face of good government and good governance. It shouldn't work like this.

1700

I don't know this man, David MacNaughton from the Strategy group. Why was he paid \$80,000 by Credit Valley? Why was he paid \$102,000 by Laurentian University in Sudbury? Why? Because it pays off. Because hospitals, universities, municipalities and many other transfer payment agencies of the government have found out that if you give money to friends of the Liberals, you get more money back. The whole thing stinks, doesn't make sense and should be stopped, and this is what this motion is talking about.

In my area, the Sudbury Regional Hospital is so strapped for cash, it's just unbelievable. They do everything they can to make their budget stretch, but they still have a deficit. They have a deficit, and it shows in patient care, because that is what a hospital does. Anybody who read the Sudbury Star last week would have seen the story of a man who, after waiting a long time in the emergency room, was admitted into Sudbury Regional Hospital. Was he admitted in a room? No, not at all. He was admitted into what one could only call a bathroom.

When I first visited the hospital, it had just been renovated. The site is beautiful, the new rooms are beautiful, and the beds are all angled so that everybody has a beautiful view. Sudbury Regional Hospital is located close to the shore of Ramsey Lake, which is a beautiful lake right in the middle of our city, a lake that people swim in, we get our drinking water from and you can fish from. I row on this lake every morning that I'm in my riding. So people have a beautiful view, the rooms are beautiful, everything is high tech, everything works well, everything is state of the art, and we should be really proud of our hospital.

But what are the stories that hit the paper? The stories that they don't have enough room; stories that nurses are now developing best practices for hallway nursing—because people are not admitted into rooms; they are admitted into hallways. And this poor gentleman—I had visited the unit that he was on before it was open, and they have this beautiful hot tub room. It's a Jacuzzi tub where they can bring patients in to basically have a very nice bath. It's easier for some people to have a bath than a shower, for people who can't stand, people who are very weak. The nurses had called it the spa room just because it was something nice, something that people deserved, and if you needed help to have a bath, well, you might as well have it in a nice tub.

But the spa room is no more. Now we have people who have been admitted into those rooms. He had his bed with the head of his bed right next to the toilet. I don't know about you, but I couldn't really sleep with my head next to a toilet. I couldn't really eat my meals with my bed next to the toilet either. But this is what we're down to, because Sudbury Regional Hospital, like many of the 157 hospitals in this province, is so strapped for cash.

So what do they do? They talk to one another. One said, "Well, I gave money to Mr. McGuinty's campaign organizer. He was able to get me in. He knew his cell-phone number. He knew his private BlackBerry. He knew how to get me in. Money well spent, wasn't it? And then we were able to get money back for our hospital."

Then it went on and on. The lobbyists, people who used to work for the McGuinty Liberals, quit their work and then sell their connections. This is what lobbying is all about. It is wrong, and our taxpayers' money should not go to do things like this. Every hospital in Ontario, except for the tertiary care ones, are struggling with alternate level of care. They are trying really, really hard to meet the quotas that have been set out for emergency room wait time targets, but right now what we see is just a numbers game. The wait times are so high in the emergency rooms, if they still haven't got a bed to admit you to, they will admit you to the hallway, they will admit you to a bathroom, to a closet, to a TV room. If you have any doubts as to what I'm saying, I will show you the rooms, the closet, the bathroom, the TV room where people at Sudbury Regional Hospital get admitted so that they can meet their wait time targets, which they have no way of meeting.

Do we have a problem? Absolutely. And this problem is not being helped by taxpayers' money paying lobbyists who can be friends with members of the Liberal government. This is wrong.

Whenever we brought it—and our leader, Andrea Horwath, the member for Hamilton, brought this—forward, we started by bringing forward cases of hospitals that have been doing this. A number of my colleagues read off the number of hospitals that are doing this that we know of. Those are the ones that have actually talked to our researchers because we all know that hospitals are not FOI-able, so if you want freedom of access of information to hospitals, you cannot do it. They don't have to give you any information.

This is our tax money that they spend. Billions of dollars of it goes to hospital budgets. Some of the big hospitals in Toronto have budgets of over \$1.2 billion—for one hospital. But if we ask them, "What are you doing with our money?"—we're not allowed to ask. They'll tell you if they feel like it, and if they don't, they don't.

Well, 14 of them agreed to talk to our researchers at the NDP caucus, and we put the list together of hospitals that voluntarily told us that they had hired lobbyists. They had paid lobbyists, they had paid people who are well-connected to the McGuinty Liberals, because their colleagues had told them, "It's an investment that is

worth doing. You will see that your agency will get more money if you do that.”

This is a sad state of affairs. Not only the hospitals are doing it, but we can see—we have the list; the same thing. The researchers at the NDP caucus picked up the phone and got the list from colleges and universities; the same thing with municipalities that are doing it. All of those agencies get transfer payments from the government and then use the taxpayers' money to hire lobbyists so that they can get more. This practice has to stop, and this is what the member from Oshawa—I always forget—Whitby–Oshawa is suggesting that we do with her motion.

There are things that hospitals can do to try to deal with the wait times in the ERs. We've heard that St. Michael's Hospital has been very successful in decreasing wait times. Frankly, they were one of the worst, where people had to wait for a very, very long time in their emergency room before they had access. They are now close to one of the best—maybe not every month, but their stats come out really good.

1710

They've done this with what they call the SOAPEE method. “S” is for safety: Make sure that, at the basis, you don't hurt anybody. It's a safety issue. When you look at all the hospitals that have high rates of C. difficile or MRSA or other hospital-acquired infections, this is not safe practice. This has to be improved.

“O” is for outcome: It should work. If you go into a hospital to get a knee replacement, it's not because you want a new knee; it's because you want to be able to walk and you want to be able to do stairs, you want to be able to sit down and you don't want to have pain. So, make sure that the outcomes are there but that they're outcomes through the eyes of the patient.

They talk about access. Access should not be access to a waiting list. It should be access to a service.

They talk about the patient experience. In my view, the patient experience is—when they come in contact with the health care system, the health care provider should be kind. Everybody who works within our hospitals should be kind to the patients that they see day in and day out.

In SOAPEE, the “E” is for equity. I, with eight other colleagues in this Legislature, spent 18 months on the Select Committee for Mental Health and Addictions, and I can tell you that we don't have equity in this province. I often talk about equity of access for the people in the northeast; we want equity of access to a PET scan. But there's also equity of access for people with mental health and addictions, who are so often discriminated against when they try to gain access.

The other “E” of SOAPEE is for efficiency, so that you spend your dollars wisely.

I wanted to show that when an agency is so strapped for cash, they need dollars to be able to maintain their mandate, to do what they set out to do for a hospital to provide quality care, to provide access, to provide good patient outcomes, to provide patient experiences that the

patient is happy with. When they don't have the budget to do this, they will turn to anything. What they have been turning to is paying lobbyists, people who used to work for the McGuinty Liberals, people who used to run their campaigns, people who used to do their fundraising, people who know them, know their cellphone numbers, know their BlackBerrys, know their dogs, their wives, their children and where they take Pitou to the vet. They are close to them; they get into their offices; they get results, and this is wrong. This is not the way it should work.

The member also talks about the need to post travel and hospitality expenses publicly. Those are also important. We talk about being in a recession. We talk about being in a time of restraint. But when you see publicly funded agencies being a little bit too lavish when it comes to hospitality expenses, it irks people. People don't like this.

Make it more transparent. Make it that health care agencies have to open up their books, that they have to show how they spend the billions of dollars that are transferred to them from the taxpayers so that the taxpayers can have a say and the taxpayers can also have knowledge of what is going on. Just the fact that those data would become public will have an impact.

As my colleague from Welland has said, the NDP will be supporting this motion. We think that the use of lobbyists by the hospitals, the universities, the colleges, by whoever receives money from the provincial government, is wrong. It should stop. It shouldn't have been there in the first place, but it shouldn't have been allowed to continue during the seven years that the McGuinty government has been in power. So we will be supporting her motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the discussion on the motion before us today from the member from Whitby–Oshawa. I want to say that it's a motion, and I'll come back to that in a minute.

We've been hearing some information that's been provided to us in this debate by all members, mixed with some rhetoric. So here's my rhetoric: It's not okay to use money intended for patient care on lobbyists. I'm on record. It's not acceptable.

I have a choice, and my choice is between a piece of legislation—a law that is very difficult for anyone not to follow—and a motion, which you can clip out and pin to your refrigerator as a reminder that you're supposed to do some nice things. I choose the law. I choose a law that says it's not going to happen.

Let's talk about where this has gone and where it has come from. If you hear the opposition, they're going to tell us that no history took place before we became government. So let's take a little journey to what happened before.

Let's talk about the partisan government advertising, found by the Auditor General, to the tune of \$400 million—just on that. And guess what? We put a law in

as soon as we became government that said, "No more." Who voted against it? The Tories.

In the complexity of a modern world of communications and the financial upheaval that we're experiencing, the increase for demand of transparency, which I agree with, and the consultants who are the experts in finding information that's valuable to us—they need to be left out of this discussion, and talk about what we're doing.

It's interesting that the Tories have found religion in opposition. Why do I say that? Well, let's take a look at some of the numbers.

In 2001-02, \$656 million of consultant money was used by that government, and then it was \$595 million the next year. What's it down to now? Because our government has made the commitment in a bill that they did not vote for, consultant fees are down to \$389 million, and creeping down lower. That's the difference between what an actionable piece of legislation is and the action of a motion that simply says, "I found religion. It's time for me to start bringing it to the attention of the electorate because there's an election coming." Holy mackerel.

Let's talk about some of the things that happened previously. Terence Young served as the Conservative MPP for Oakville from 1995 to 1999, in a mandate. Guess who he was lobbying for and which government he was lobbying on behalf of health care? South Muskoka Memorial Hospital in 2002-03—he made money doing that; Grand River Hospital in 2003-04; Hamilton Health Sciences in 2001-03. Whoops. I forgot. There is no history before 2003. It didn't happen.

Charles Harnick, a member of Mike Harris's cabinet—who did he lobby for? For the member from Kingston: Kingston General Hospital, the Hospital for Sick Children—oh, my goodness, money spent. Where was the indignation? Where were the motions then? Where was the legislation? It didn't happen.

This is what the Tories did. They voted against the 2009 Public Sector Expenses Review Act. Where's the religion? It didn't exist; it still doesn't. They voted against the Good Government Act to put measures that will increase the effectiveness, clarity and accountability of government. What did they vote for? Not that one.

I'll tell you what else: The PCs and the NDP voted against banning partisan government advertising.

I want to suggest to you respectfully that I believe the religion they've found is not a strong religion. I have a sneaking suspicion it's got a lot to do with getting a vote.

I want to pass a law that says they can't do it. They want to put a motion on the refrigerator with a magnet that says, "Let's make sure we talk about this, and let's mark them up."

So that my friends in the NDP don't feel as if I'm just picking on the Tories, let's take an example of what they did when they were in government—another history lesson. My rhetoric: Put it on the table. Starting in 1999, a well-known Conservative lobbyist, John Matheson, was hired by the city of Hamilton on a variety of projects

including arranging meetings, presentations and phone calls—as I said, spending money to be hired by this previous Tory insider. In 2001, they hired a city of Hamilton report to be written, the strategy of planning sessions—

Interjection.

1720

Mr. Dave Levac: Just a minute. You're wrecking my drama. Let me get to it; I'll tell you in you a second.

John Matheson, himself a chief of staff to the Harris-era Conservative Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, now the Strategy Corp. principal—and guess who was on Hamilton city council during that time, from 1997 to 2004? I have to tell you—and I'll tell you straight, because my rhetoric does have a little truth to it. I don't know how she voted, but Andrea Horwath was on that committee.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: Excuse me, Speaker. I will—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You'll be careful, I know.

Mr. Dave Levac: I will rephrase that. The leader of the third party, who has been railing against a bunch of cities—except she forgot to include Hamilton.

I want to make sure that people understand that the Auditor General also found a couple of other interesting points. The interesting point that has come out in the rhetoric that has been spoken and the catchphrases that are being used by the opposition—it's rather interesting that they talk about the "billion-dollar boondoggle." But for the record, and you can test my rhetoric, \$400 million of that eHealth money was from previous government—the Tory government—expenditures on consultants, a little-known fact that seems to have been buried in the underbelly of rhetoric. I just thought I would bring it up to make sure that people understand that it was \$400 million that the previous government already started to spend on the reincarnation of e-health.

When I talk about why I said, in my first sentence—I want to come back to you and make it very clear: It is not okay to use money that was intended for patient care to hire lobbyists. I agree with that 100%. I can bet you dollars to doughnuts that if there's anybody in this room who does not vote for the legislation that's coming forward, I am going to be the first to stand up and to ask why not.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I am pleased to be able to join the debate this afternoon on the resolution introduced by my colleague the member for Whitby-Oshawa.

This resolution shines light on the outrageous practice of publicly funded hospitals and other health agencies spending money provided to them by Ontario's taxpayers to lobby the government of Ontario. Money that could be going to front-line health care is going to lobbyists and to pay for unnecessary and wasteful travel and hospitality. My colleague's resolution would require that all of this

expense money be published publicly. Let's put it on the Internet where all taxpayers can see it.

Why do we need these changes? Let's review some of the history of health agency waste under this government.

The first one that comes to mind is Cancer Care Ontario. An audit noted that Cancer Care Ontario spent just less than \$75 million on consultants in two years, between March 2007 and March 2009. The audit took particular aim at nearly \$20 million worth of work that Cancer Care Ontario paid Courtyard Group Ltd., starting in April 2006, on its wait times information strategy. The firm collected another \$20 million in contracts between eHealth and the ministry between 2004 and 2009.

Another example is eHealth Ontario. Let's remember what the Auditor General found. One consultant was employed for seven years, and his firm was paid \$2 million. Another was employed for six years, and the firm he worked for got \$2.4 million. EHealth Ontario contracted, without a competitive process, a recruiting firm to hire 15 senior managers, paid upfront and asked for no money back when only five positions were filled from 15.

One favoured firm of eHealth Ontario submitted a bid for work that was more than five times higher than another qualified bidder but was allowed to rebid. The company then got an extra \$594,000 to hire more of its staff. One consultant awarded five contracts worth \$1.3 million to a consulting firm with which he was associated.

More than 40% of staff at eHealth were consultants, including one in four senior management positions. Consultants were paid at high rates to review voicemail greetings, thank you letters and seasonal party communications. While professional editing services can be acquired on contract for \$50 to \$60 an hour, eHealth was paying \$300 an hour. Two consultants were effectively paid at a rate of more than \$700,000 annually before expenses until their contracts were terminated when the media published that information.

Local health integration networks are another area where government waste has been uncovered. Seven million dollars discovered in untendered LHIN contracts is one example. There was nearly 200 million in health care dollars wasted on LHIN salaries and administration. The LHINs failed implementation of the aging at home strategy.

As most members know, the LHINs were set up by this government to act as a buffer between government and the people generally, to make it look as if the Minister of Health was not responsible for hospital cuts and other difficult health care decisions. They have certainly acted as a buffer between taxpayers and their money.

Overall, a terrible record of waste and a complete lack of accountability; every one of these health agencies should be transparent and accountable for how they spend the taxpayers' money, and then none of them would need lobbyists.

I also think it's a sad sign that these agencies think they need to hire lobbyists for the government to listen to

them. It comes to a comment made by earlier supporters of this resolution in questioning this practice, particularly for agencies that are dependent on government dollars talking to ministries also dependent on taxpayer dollars. It opens up the question of, what is the role of the MPP?

The member for Newmarket–Aurora spoke earlier in debate about this and the fact that, as I tell my constituents, I'm there. My door is open. I'm there at a phone call, an appointment, to provide that kind of conduit. That is the role of the MPP. It is the role of the MPP to represent the community and all of the agencies that operate within that community.

I think it's also a sad commentary on the importance of the democratic system. Democracy rests on the individual. It rests on respect for the individual. One person, one vote, not decision-making by lobby groups. I'm afraid that some of what we are discussing here today is exactly that: government by lobby groups. I think that it's a very sad situation when there is such a reliance on the part of government to have to have this conduit to hear these voices.

So I encourage all members of this House to support this resolution. If the minister says she will introduce a new law to deal with lobbyists, then she should show her good intentions by supporting our resolution today.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to rise today to comment on this motion that's on the floor, which has to do with the issue of hospitals hiring lobbyists. I want to start off by making myself very clear: We agree it is not okay to use money intended for patient care to hire a lobbyist. It's not okay to take money from the taxpayers and to turn around and use that to hire a lobbyist to lobby for more money from the taxpayers. That's not how we are supposed to use taxpayer money in Ontario; we agree. In fact, the Minister of Health has made it very clear that if a hospital or a CCAC or the management of a LHIN wants to talk to the minister, they can call the minister's office directly; they don't need to have a lobbyist intervene. There's absolutely no reason that any health organization in Ontario needs to go out and hire a lobbyist to do this. They can talk to the ministry; they can talk to the minister's office.

The motion from the member for Whitby–Oshawa—in fairness to the member, she did suggest that we do more with the motion than just tack it up on the fridge. She suggested that if the motion passed today, it would be appropriate to send a memo to the various organizations and tell them that they shouldn't have consultant lobbyists. We don't think that's good enough. We think that what we need to do is actually have legislation and put it in law that you cannot be using taxpayer money to hire consultant lobbyists. We really do believe that we need to get this in law, not just send the memo. That's what I want to see happen, and it's what the minister has committed to doing.

Quite frankly, this government has had a very good record in terms of looking at the issues of transparency

and accountability. Let's give a little bit of a history here. We have eliminated sole-source contracts so that all new Ontario government consulting contracts must follow a competitive hiring process—

Interjection: We're the first government to do that.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: —the first government to do that. Consultants will not be able to bill for hospitality or for food expenses or incidental costs. This includes things like management, information technology, technical services, research and development, policy development, communications consultants—a lot broader than just lobbyists. All these consultants must go through a competitive procurement process. Not only does that apply to the ministries, it also applies to all the major agencies of the Ontario government.

In addition to that, because we do want to be careful about expenses, starting this year we are posting expenses for all the OPS—that is, the Ontario public sector—senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff, senior executives, again, at Ontario's 22 largest agencies—all of these. Now, I'm not sure whether all the opposition leaders have posted their expenses, but we are having a requirement that people post their expenses.

We're increasing the number of random internal audits that will be done to make sure that if people are fudging on their expenses, we're going to find out. The Integrity Commissioner, when looking at the senior expenses, will have the power to demand that if people have not followed the rules, they will have to repay out of their own pockets. So there has been a significant commitment.

If we look at the whole of access to information, freedom of information, interestingly—and it goes back to what my colleague the member from Brant was saying—some sort of corporate memory seemed to click off before October 2003. But if you go back before that, it's interesting that the previous Conservative government actually brought in legislation to remove freedom of information for hydro and for OLG. They actually made it less transparent. But what we've done is made Cancer Care Ontario subject to freedom of information. We have made publicly funded universities subject to freedom of information. We have brought Hydro One and OPG, Ontario Power Generation, back in. We have brought local public utilities into freedom of information. We actually amended the Auditor General Act so that the Auditor General, for the first time ever, has the authority to look at all those transfer agencies—the major transfer agencies and the major agencies of the Ontario government.

So I've got to tell you that as somebody who sits on the public accounts, I think we actually spend about half our time now looking at transfer partners like hospitals, school boards, Hydro One and a whole host of places where a lot of the money goes; we're actually spending a lot of time looking at them now on public accounts. You could never do that before the McGuinty government extended the legislation and made that possible. So we make apologies to no one in terms of our transparency and accountability.

I must say that I do think I understand why it's the member from Whitby–Oshawa, and not the leader of the official opposition, who has brought this motion forward. I think it goes back to that old proverb that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, because I'd like to go back before that sort of history block that the opposition has and look at what their practices were.

When they had people leaving government, it's interesting to note what happened with Guy Giorno, who in fact was Premier Harris's chief of staff—more recently Harper's chief of staff. When he stopped being chief of staff, he became a consultant, a lobbyist for Bridgepoint Health. John Capobianco, perennial federal Conservative, also a ministerial assistant here to Conservatives—I think maybe something to do with Ford's campaign. I don't know. Anyway, he was a lobbyist for the Hospital for Sick Children, for West Lincoln Memorial Hospital and for the Shoullice Hospital. Leslie Noble, senior Harris adviser—senior Eves adviser too, actually—we'll come back to her later. She was a consultant for the Rouge Valley Health System and the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital.

So there's a lot of the pot calling the black here, because in fact this practice of hiring former Conservative operators to act as consultants and lobbyists is something that went on all the time when there was a Tory government around here. And maybe that's why they just want to sign the memo and don't actually—we're not sure yet whether they really want to see the legislation.

But if you really want to see people running up taxpayer money to Conservative insiders, you need to go and look at some of the other really big bills, not just hospitals, because they couldn't afford to pay the big bills. The Tories spent \$662 million on consultants in their last full year of office, and from what we know, it looks as though six particular Tory insiders took more than \$10 million of taxpayers' money, interestingly, starting with Mike Harris, who actually didn't get as much as the rest of the crowd.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: He probably doesn't need it.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I don't know.

Anyway, he got \$18,000. But look at some of these others. Paul Rhodes, Harris's communication officer, got over \$1 million. Tom Long, another senior Tory—oh, this is going up here—over \$3 million. How about Michael Gourley, an Eves adviser? Over \$4 million.

1740

Anyway, we have no apologies to make to anyone. I think perhaps the reason we're not sure about whether or not the opposition will support our bill when our bill comes in—we'll have to wait and see how they land on that. We don't know that yet. But we want something stronger than just sending a memo. We want legislation, because there is this long-standing practice here that doesn't quite pass the smell test. We're willing to really stop it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I didn't know I'd have this opportunity to speak this afternoon. I had planned to be in the House and support the resolution when the vote takes place, but I do have this opportunity to speak briefly, and I'm glad to have that chance.

I just want to inform the House of a situation that took place 20 years ago in the first few months of my first term in office. I guess it was in December 1990. There was a hospital in my constituency at that time called the Louise Marshall Hospital in Mount Forest. Right after I was elected, we had a crisis in the hospital in Mount Forest in that a number of doctors decided that they would refuse to cover the emergency department at night, and so effectively the emergency department was closed in the evenings. It was a community crisis, as a matter of fact. What I did, of course, was approach the Minister of Health of the day. The New Democrats were in power, and the Minister of Health of the day was Evelyn Gigantes. I asked her to meet with the hospital staff to discuss the issue. We had a meeting in her boardroom. She listened to the concern that we were expressing, she pondered the issue and she solved it. That was an experience I'll never forget because it was my first big crisis in the riding.

The fact is, the hospital board and the hospital staff did not need to hire a consultant. They came to their MPP, and their MPP took action. Their MPP made sure that a meeting could take place, facilitated it and the minister responded. That's the way it should work.

There is absolutely no need in my mind for a hospital to hire a consultant to access the provincial government, and there should be no need. The fact that some hospitals believe they must hire consultants should trouble all of us. The fact is, many of them believe that they have no other choice, that that's the only way they're going to get a satisfactory resolution of their problem. Again, that should trouble each and every member of this House, and we should resolve to ensure that there is no need, that we do our jobs as MPPs to ensure that those issues are coming forward and that the government is giving suitable and proper consideration.

Now, I've heard two government members—the last two speakers, actually, the member for Guelph and the member for Brant—imply that they're not going to support this motion because the government may have a bill forthcoming and they'd rather vote for a bill or a law as opposed to a resolution, even though the resolution calls for something that they would, I think, acknowledge needs to be done and that they would say that they support in principle.

It's also interesting and important to point out that on September 9 this House and members in this chamber voted across party lines to support both a motion and a bill to give farmers a tax credit for donating to food banks. That day we were consistent. Members of the House voted in favour of the principle of the bill and voted in favour of the principle as articulated in a motion. So I think that the government, using that excuse, will not really be able to convince people that they're sincere in that respect.

I would call on all members to support this resolution today, and I would again give credit to our member for Whitby—Oshawa for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to spend a few minutes this afternoon to talk about this resolution.

I recall when I was a young student attending St. John the Baptist elementary school on Jane Street in the south end of Peterborough. Sister Gervais was the principal, and she always drilled into us the famous gospel of John, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." That is an interesting Biblical backdrop for my remarks this afternoon.

I note today that there was a great article in the National Post. John Ivison has an article entitled, "NDP Happy to Dance with 'High-Priced, Well-Connected Insiders.'" I just want to quote from the article. It says:

"Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath has been leading the charge against the use of lobbyists by public institutions like hospitals and universities. 'Something is very, very wrong here,' she said yesterday at Queen's Park, the provincial Legislature.

"Why are universities spending money on high-priced, well-connected insider lobbyists?"

"Premier Dalton McGuinty has been spooked, so he has agreed to introduce legislation to ban public institutions from using tax dollars to hire outside consultants.

"Score one for the whiter-than-white knights in the NDP and none for those lobbyist weasels. Obviously, the dippers have no time for such dubious practices.

"Except, of course, when it comes to fundraising time. Then the 'high-priced, well-connected insiders' become 'dear friends' and are invited to take out \$9,300 'sponsorship opportunities' at the Leaders' Levee event—a ritzy 'window into a bygone era of big music, style and elegance' at the Palais Royale ballroom in Toronto," on November 27.

Rest assured that Harry Rosen and Holt Renfrew will be doing a hell of a business during that week if everybody gets out there to get the tuxedos and the fancy gowns.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: At an NDP event?

Mr. Jeff Leal: At an NDP event. In fact, the leader, the president of the NDP, our good friend Sandra Clifford, said that it promises to be "a wonderful evening," with a cash bar and tickets at \$1,000 a crack." That is from those great, sanctimonious socialists who are always standing up for the disadvantaged of the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Will the member from Welland wear a suit?

Mr. Jeff Leal: We're looking forward to that one, but let's get digging here a little further. This is really interesting.

Let's look at the facts here. The McGuinty government has reduced reliance on consulting services from what the Tories had of \$656 million to \$389 million in

the fiscal year 2007-08. But look at the Leader of the Opposition's expenses—there were some real gems here: In 2001, during 145 days between April 1 and August 23, 2001, the Leader of the Opposition and the staff racked up over \$23,000 in expenses ranging from meals, hotels, plants—must have been very nice plants; geraniums, I suspect—gum, doughnuts and napkins.

There was also a visit for a room at the Kittling Ridge winery, which I know is down on the Niagara peninsula. There were also events charged up for a fishing licence when he was Minister of Tourism. When he was Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Mr. Hudak travelled to Las Vegas. He was probably down there to see the Wayne Newton show, and all expenses were paid. He even expensed \$1.54 for a cup of coffee and 93 cents for a doughnut while in Vegas.

It gets better than that. I could go on and on and on. There was a nice little trip to Rio de Janeiro, but we don't want to get into that one.

Here's a good one: Mr. Gourley hit the jackpot when he was a lobbyist for the Conservatives. He was a former adviser to Ernie Eves during the \$5.6-billion deficit, and was given a \$3,700,000 untendered contract to provide advice on the privatization of hydro. The contract broke Hydro One's rules by paying Gourley before the contract was even signed. Gourley left his job as CEO of the Ontario Financing Authority in November 2003 and, as was stipulated by his contract, he received \$917,699 of taxpayers' money in salary and expenses.

It's interesting. As I said, I go back to John: "He who has no sin cast the first stone." I can tell you that on this side it's my view that no hospital, no community college and no university should ever use any of their precious dollars to hire lobbyists. We believe that we don't need to have a memo; we need to have solid legislation that we can put into place, and we know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will be bringing in a bill later this month to make exactly that happen.

There are some others. We have Leslie Noble. Who else do we have here, I say to my friend, the member from Guelph? Paul Rhodes, Tom Long, Leslie Noble, Jaime Watt—and the list goes on and on.

In fact, it's disgraceful the way all these people were up to the trough for so many years and collecting all this money. You know one of the first things we did when we came into power? We banned partisan advertising, those great information bulletins that were prepared by all those Conservative consultants, year in and year out, to provide partisan information that no one was particularly interested in receiving. We cleaned all of that up.

We're on record for bringing in legislative initiatives that have never been supported by the opposition and never supported by the third party, and we know why. When we bring in our bill at the end of this month, we'll show clearly to the citizens of Ontario that we mean business and that there will be no lobbyists receiving money from public funds. This is the way we need to go, and I take no lessons from anybody opposite on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Elliott has moved opposition day number 2. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France

Hillier, Randy
Kormos, Peter
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Munro, Julia
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Arthurs, Wayne
Best, Margaret
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Carroll, Aileen
Chiarelli, Bob
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael

Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziatti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 14; the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We have some business to carry on with a late show, so as long as you're quiet—I would appreciate your co-operation.

The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and

the minister or parliamentary assistant has five minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I called this late show, as I intend to do each and every time in the future when I get answers like I got on October 4 concerning my question.

I asked what I thought was a sane and sensible question. I asked whether the Premier and, by extension, when he passed it to the minister, would support the Put Food in the Budget campaign. What they were clearly asking for was whether members of this House would participate and try to live for up to one week off a diet which is given to people at any of the food banks in Ontario. The inadequate response of the minister caused me to call this, because it's quite clear. When I spoke in my question, I talked about the inadequate rates that don't allow people to have healthy meals that would keep them healthy and their families healthy.

Every single government member on the Liberal side who participated in the Do the Math exercise, as the minister said she did, acknowledged that there were not sufficient funds in the budget. The average member said that at least \$1,350 would have to be in the budget, not the 500-plus dollars that are given to a welfare recipient.

I asked if the Premier would participate on the diet for one week. The diet consists of bread, one litre of milk, one potato, one onion, one can of tuna, two packages of Kraft dinner, some rice, some soup, one small jar of peanut butter, three juice boxes and a can of beans. That's what's in it, and I asked the Premier and, by extension, the minister whether they would participate.

The minister questioned me. She talked about, first of all, the good job the Daily Bread Food Bank does, and I have no umbrage whatsoever with the good job they do. But that's all she answered in the first question. I thought, "Maybe she's saving it for the supplementary," so I went back to living on the diet for one week. I asked the Premier and the minister again if they would participate in the program. I advised them that the social assistance rates—which is correct—are down 30% since 1994. I talked about the clawback, which continues. Then I asked—I think, clearly and nicely—whether or not they would try the diet for a week.

I was very disappointed with their response. The minister went on a bit of a tirade, talking about all the things that I had voted against. I don't remember any of those things ever coming up for an individual vote. It was, in fact, a whole bunch of stuff related to various Liberal budgets over the years. And quite frankly, when you are in this House, you have a chance to vote for a budget or not vote for a budget. For me to have supported some of the measures she was talking about, I would have had to have voted for the HST. If she thinks that this party is going to vote for such a hare-brained idea—I don't know where she thinks we're coming from. We will not support a budget in its totality which actually harms people. If there are some sweeteners in that budget, we have to learn to live without those sweeteners. This is nothing but nonsense to talk about parties and opposition

members voting against your hand-picked little programs that you think are so wonderful.

This same budget included the HST; it included rates in a whole bunch of things, including hydro; there was a lack of dollars for those who are on ODSP, and especially those who are on ODSP and general welfare who are childless. They are actually worse off today than in the deepest, darkest days of the Mike Harris government, because the funds that have been done to increase the budgets for those on ODSP and Ontario Works who in fact are childless are actually 1% or 2% lower today than they were when the Harris government was removed from office in 2003.

I don't know of what the minister is so proud. But she concluded the whole thing—which makes me angry—she asked me to support this. She asked me to support a government that is doing virtually nothing to help the poor. She asked me to support her when neither she nor the Premier would answer the question, nor would they go on the diet for one week to see what it's like to live on such meagre things, to eat food which I'm sure she would find inferior and that she wouldn't feed to her own children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues.

1810

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to one of the most important challenges in Ontario.

Poverty is a complex issue. No one community, no one level of government can tackle it alone. So I want to begin by thanking, as I did in the answer to the question, community organizations that work day in and day out to support people living in poverty and who advocate on their behalf.

Just last week, we saw the community foundations across the province come out with a local Vital Signs report that looked at the progress that all levels of government, the private sector and communities are making to address issues like housing, employment and inclusion.

The member opposite has been talking about the work of community organizations, another community organization that's looking to bring attention to the issue of social assistance rates. That work is also important.

The issue is so important that our government has recognized the need for change. We have taken action, and I am proud of that action. Since we were elected, we've increased social assistance rates every year, for a total of 12%. What does that mean to a real family? A single mum, for instance, receiving Ontario Works with two children aged five and seven has seen an increase of \$7,230, or 42%, since 2003.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. You're out of your seat.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Are we where we need to be yet on social assistance and on poverty reduction in general? Absolutely not. That's why Ontario has the coun-

try's most ambitious and aggressive poverty reduction strategy, with a target of reducing child poverty by 25% by 2013. We have a plan to reduce poverty, and we're making progress on that plan.

Our government recognizes that social assistance is far from perfect. In fact, our own Premier said that the OW and the ODSP rules stomp people into the ground. So as part of the poverty reduction strategy, we're undertaking a social assistance review, and we're looking forward to announcing it in the fall of 2010. The review also makes social assistance programs easier to understand, more transparent and financially sustainable.

To facilitate this, we created the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council, chaired by Gail Nyberg of the Daily Bread Food Bank. The Ministry of Community and Social Services is proceeding with policy work required to effect a number of changes based on the recommendations from the social assistance review council. This is important work, and it will make a real difference in the lives of low-income Ontarians.

We've taken a number of critical steps, as we've moved forward, to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25% by 2013. We're helping kids succeed in school so that we can break an intergenerational cycle of poverty. We're stabilizing families financially and giving them the tools to improve their economic well-being.

This fall, 35,000 four- and five-year-olds started full-day kindergarten in nearly 600 schools across Ontario. This is one of the most important things that we can do to give every child an opportunity to succeed, and we are investing \$200 million this year and \$300 million next year.

We've nearly quadrupled funding to the student nutrition program so that our kids are ready to learn. We're providing healthy, nutritional meals and snacks so that kids can concentrate and get the most out of their

day. We've created 700 new breakfast programs and expanded 300 existing ones in high-needs communities.

We've stepped in when the federal government stepped away and invested \$63.5 million to save 8,500 child care spaces and create 1,000 child care jobs.

We've increased the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 per child—that's almost \$92 per month—two years ahead of schedule. This one action, the introduction of the OCB, marked a transformation in our social assistance. For my colleague opposite to call it a hand-picked little program I think is embarrassing.

Individuals like Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld, the co-chair of the June Callwood campaign, said that the creation of the OCB shows that the McGuinty government is on the way to keeping its platform promises and keeping faith with the anti-poverty community.

Michael Oliphant, from the Daily Bread Food Bank, has said that the OCB marks a significant turning point in Ontario.

I applaud and encourage all communities who are active, who are engaging us, who are pushing us to do more. We've developed this strategy here at Queen's Park. We believe in the expertise of voices like Pat Capponi, of Voices from the Street.

We're moving in the right direction. On this side of the House, we have a clear commitment to reduce poverty. It's clear and it's consistent. It's not about photo ops, politics and rhetoric. It's about getting real things done for real families in Ontario, and I'm proud of what we do every single day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday morning, October 7.

The House adjourned at 1815.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
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Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
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Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
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Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	2611

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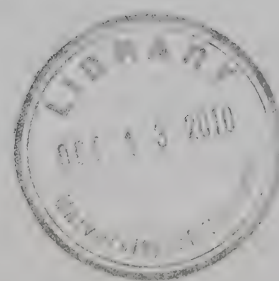
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Thursday 7 October 2010

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Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Sikh prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO
ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT
FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO
FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO
POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE
ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 6, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? Questions and comments?

Seeing none, Ms. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjection: No

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister without portfolio?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I guess I had anticipated a vote on this particular bill. I'm not sure whether the House leaders are ordering this for committee or not. Was it the intent to—

Interjections.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I think this is going to finance and economic affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES ORGANISATIONS SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les organisations sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Since the member from Wel-land asked a question, I pay full tribute to my predecessors in this post, who include the Minister of Revenue, the member from Hamilton Mountain, as well as her predecessor, the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale, Mr. Ted McMeekin. Both of them were intricately involved in trying to update the not-for-profit corporations law.

As well, I would like to pay tribute to my parliamentary assistant, Mr. Jim Brownell, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and Mr. Rick Johnson, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, who did a yeoman's work in making sure that this bill got through committee and really shepherded it to where it is today.

As a practising lawyer, I had the opportunity to probably incorporate over the years at least 12 not-for-profit corporations. Let me tell you, under the old system, it was burdensome and tough, much tougher than to incorporate a for-profit corporation. I think the bill we have in front of us, which is at least 50 years in coming, I would say, is a great improvement to the large not-for-profit sector that we have in Ontario.

We have approximately 46,000 not-for-profit corporations in Ontario and we simply want to make it easier for them to operate and to do business in today's world, in today's marketplace. We want to ensure that they have the legal certainties that they need to operate effectively in today's world.

We've heard from the not-for-profit sector on all of these concerns, and we are convinced that the existing legislation no longer meets the needs of Ontario's dynamic, diverse and growing not-for-profit sector. It's for that reason that our government has introduced the proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act as a modern legal framework and effective response to the sector's concerns.

The not-for-profit corporations in operation across Ontario are our museums, art galleries, trade associations,

social clubs, sports clubs and environmental groups—just about any organization that you can think of in the not-for-profit sector.

Almost eight million people volunteer their valuable time for not-for-profits—eight million people in a province of some 13 million to 14 million people. Every second person in this province is in some way or another involved with a not-for-profit organization.

These diverse corporations and their army of volunteers benefit the people in our province in countless ways. They work to relieve poverty, to advance education, to strengthen medical research and to share faiths. They promote awareness of good causes and engage Ontarians in their communities. They build community spirit and truly make Ontario the tremendous place to live in that it is today.

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Just as important, they generate approximately \$50 billion each year in annual revenues and employ about one million people in this province in one way or another. Our goal as a government is to support and strengthen this vital sector.

If the bill is passed, the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act would be far simpler to understand than the legislation that currently governs the not-for-profit corporations sector. It would make it easier for organizations to conduct business in today's marketplace and would allow them to respond better to the diverse needs of their clients. It would enable Ontario to leap to the forefront as a leader in the not-for-profit corporations law sector, and it would help build a stronger province for all of us.

Let me just address some of the key reforms that are contained in this act. I will begin with the incorporation process.

The current incorporation system is complex, cumbersome and lengthy, much more so in the not-for-profit sector than it is in the for-profit sector. For example, it takes approximately six to eight weeks to complete the process. The complicated and time-consuming process results in errors and applications being returned to applicants for revision, which slows the process even further. I can certainly personally attest to that in my former life as a lawyer in this province.

Under our proposed act, incorporation would be streamlined and faster. Our goal is to bring the time to incorporate down to seven working days or less—seven working days or less from the current time period of anywhere from six to eight weeks or, in many cases, even longer than that. Moreover, the proposed new act would allow for electronic incorporation. In the future, when fully implemented, incorporation could be completed in just a few days.

Another benefit of the proposed new act would be the ability for not-for-profits to generate their own revenues with a clear understanding of what is and what is not a permissible profit-generating activity. We have heard that the not-for-profit corporations are uncertain about what kinds of profit-generating activities are permitted. The new proposed act would provide much-needed clarity

that not-for-profit corporations would be allowed to engage in commercial activities as a means of generating revenue. This might include, for example, operating a restaurant or a clothing store in order to provide people who are otherwise unemployable with job skills and a basic income.

Another area where the bill would provide new benefits to not-for-profits is in the area of transparency. This bill, if passed, will generate greater transparency around financial information. Currently, directors must present financial statements to members during the annual meeting. There is no requirement for these financial statements to be distributed to members in advance of the annual meeting. I think we've all been to not-for-profit annual meetings where this happens on a regular basis. The proposed new act would ensure that members, upon request, are entitled to receive financial statements in advance of the annual general meeting. This would obviously allow members to better assess the financial state of the not-for-profit corporation, and it would facilitate greater accountability for directors and the management of the corporation.

In addition, our proposed bill would give members of not-for-profit organizations more tools to ensure that their directors and officers meet their obligations as set out in the corporation's governing documents or in the proposed new act. For example, members would be able to ask a court to order that directors give members reasons for terminations of membership, had they failed to do so. That's currently not the case.

The current act does not provide directors and officers with a clear statement about their duties and obligations to the corporation. Our proposed new act states that directors and officers must act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the corporation and that they must exercise the care, diligence and skill that a reasonable, prudent person would exercise in similar circumstances.

We have heard from stakeholders that finding qualified directors to serve on boards is and can be challenging, and this is partly due to the fact that under the current act, there's no limitation on the liability of directors and officers. This is a significant disincentive to find directors who would serve under those circumstances. Our bill would increase liability protection by providing a broad due-diligence defence to allow directors to rely on the good faith of professional advisers and skilled managers. This improved protection from personal liability would encourage more qualified people to serve on boards. Now, I understand that some of the not-for-profit sectors feel that we haven't gone far enough, but we feel there are certain protections in the new act that weren't there before that will be extremely helpful in finding new individuals who may want to serve on boards of directors.

Another key benefit of the proposed new act would relate to increased financial accountability. Today, it is costly to meet the audit requirements of the act unless the not-for-profit corporations meet onerous exemption requirements. The proposed new act would allow not-for-

profit corporations to choose a less-expensive financial review instead of a full audit, in appropriate circumstances, and this obviously would reduce the expenses of many smaller not-for-profit corporations.

Stakeholders have identified the lack of a provision in the existing Corporations Act that permits a resolution in lieu of a directors' meeting as an unnecessary burden in conducting the affairs of the business of that not-for-profit organization. Our proposed new act allows that a unanimous resolution would be permitted in place of a directors' meeting. This would provide an important degree of flexibility and help corporations save the cost and expense of holding a meeting when all directors agree on a particular matter.

In another step towards greater flexibility, the proposed new act allows that a member who wishes to participate in decision-making, but who is not physically present at a meeting, would have more options to vote. Proxy voting and voting by mailed-in ballots or by telephone or electronic means would be permitted. It is bringing the situation into the 21st century.

Often, there are serious questions as to the validity of many of the activities of the not-for-profit corporations. This is because many of the not-for-profit corporations have deficient bylaws or none at all. Under the proposed new act, corporations would be able to adopt what we call default organizational bylaws, rather than draft their own bylaws, which would save them the cost of hiring a lawyer. For instance, if a corporation fails to adopt an organizational bylaw within a specific period of time after incorporation, the corporation would be deemed to have adopted a standard-form bylaw approved by the ministry. In many cases, a lawyer would not be required to prepare the organizational bylaw, which could benefit the not-for-profit organization with significant cost savings.

Our reforms, as proposed in the new legislation, would create a modern statute that would be transparent, flexible, efficient and fair. It would, indeed, strengthen the sector, and it's a huge sector in Ontario, as I've already indicated, of more than 46,000 organizations in which over a million people are involved.

Much of the proposed new legislative strength comes from the extensive consultations we undertook—and that my predecessors undertook—over a long period of time, and the contributions that our stakeholders have made in helping to develop it. Over two years, our government released three discussion papers to solicit comments and suggestions on the reform of the Corporations Act. We listened to the feedback on the proposed new act from our partners, representing more than 200 organizations, during workshops in Ottawa, London, Toronto and Thunder Bay. Our ministry established a Web advisory panel to consult with key partners on preliminary policy recommendations. We also formed an interministerial working group, representing 15 ministries, in order to reach as broad a stakeholder base as possible. This proposed act that we are debating today reflects this feedback.

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Most recently, the Standing Committee on Social Policy made a number of amendments to Bill 65 to respond to the presentations that were made at public hearings held here in Toronto on August 23 of this year. As a result, the bill, amongst others, provides for an alternative to the use of proxy voting. It removes the requirement that at least two thirds of directors must be members and it also removes the requirement that no more than one third of the directors may be officers of a public benefit corporation.

Once again, I would like to thank all my the colleagues on both sides of the House, the parliamentary assistant and the previous Ministers of Consumer Services for supporting our efforts and for ensuring comprehensive input to the legislation from the broader government perspective. I'd also, of course, like to thank all of those organizations that provided very valuable input in this process.

Reaction to our proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act has been and continues to be positive. It doesn't do everything that some people wanted us to do, but I think that as a general approach, it is a milestone ahead—

Mr. Peter Kormos: It didn't change the polling, did it, John? It didn't change that 76% who don't live down in Toronto.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, you know, it's always interesting to listen to the interjections from the member from Welland. But of course, as he well knows, I think everybody in this House supports this bill, as do the people of Ontario and as does the not-for-profit sector in Ontario.

Let me just tell you a little bit about some of the people and some of the organizations that support this effort to modernize the situation that existed in Ontario over the last 50 years. The United Way has indicated its support of Bill 65—and let me also just encourage everyone at this time of the year to support the United Way in your local community. They do a tremendous amount of good work with a lot of charitable and not-for-profit organizations. The Ontario Bar Association applauds the ministry for its initiative in bringing Bill 65 forward. We have heard from not-for-profit organizations across the province. They are eager for a simpler, more relevant and clearer act.

As you know, our government has committed to modernizing Ontario's business laws. It's necessary to meet all the challenges and opportunities that are there for us in the 21st century, and it's our responsibility as leaders to ensure that Ontario attracts investments and jobs, remains an efficient place to do business and is able to effectively compete in the global economy. Modernizing the Corporations Act and the laws that govern the not-for-profit sector is an important part of this process. It would further enhance the efficiency of Ontario's business laws and it would also support our government's Open for Business initiative.

Let me just sum up: Our bill, the bill that's currently before the House and that has broad support, reduces

burdens on organizations. We want not-for-profit organizations to be concerned and to be involved in the kind of activities that they're involved in rather than to worry about whether or not their governance structure is up to date.

This bill reduces the burdens on those organizations. It ensures government services such as the processing of applications are delivered in a faster and smarter way: from the six to eight weeks that it would normally take to what we hope to have in place very soon, one or two days through electronic registration. It would streamline operational and administrative requirements, facilitate the effective operations of our not-for-profit organizations and help them do more of the good work that they do so well in this province.

Finally, the approximately 46,000 not-for-profit corporations across Ontario deserve a modern statute that reflects their unique characteristics and complexity. They deserve to have certainty and clarity in their operations as they work to benefit Ontarians and contribute to the economic strength of this province. They deserve to be able to grow in the best way possible, and by moving forward on the proposed bill that's before the House today, this Legislature and this province will be supporting their strength and their success. We would be providing this vibrant and innovative sector with the legislation that it needs in order to progress in the 21st century, and we will be taking another step forward in modernizing corporate and commercial statutes for the benefit of Ontario's businesses as well as for the not-for-profit communities. Quite simply, this bill will enhance and help us build a stronger Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to take a few minutes to offer a few comments on this bill.

I think everyone agrees that it is an important initiative and that the role of not-for-profits in our communities is very significant. There have been several economic studies demonstrating the kind of value that volunteers provide in our community—that is, economic value in terms of hours provided, never mind the social benefit of not-for-profit organizations—and the army of people who stand behind those organizations. So I don't think that there's anyone who disputes the importance of a bill such as this which, I would argue, has a very worthy goal—that of helping the not-for-profit organizations organize themselves and operate in a better fashion. So certainly we will be supporting the bill.

But there are a few things that I think need to be pointed out about the bill, and one of those is the process this bill has taken through the Legislature. The government has certainly used, to be the most generous, a variable speed in dealing with this bill. By their own admission, the government started consultations three years ago and produced a bill to be introduced last spring. One would think that after this kind of a lengthy consultation process, you'd have virtually a perfect bill before this. But after these three years of consultation, then we get a

very, very speeded-up part of the process where we're actually discussing third reading in the confines of a time allocation motion for this bill.

On the one hand, we have three years of sort of snail-like consultation. Then the guillotine comes down, and we are to debate the bill and put it through very, very quickly. We had one day of hearings.

In my discussions with members of not-for-profits, both in my own riding and province-wide organizations, they don't even know about this bill. Some of these organizations that I spoke to are certainly ones that have a provincial component, a provincial area of jurisdiction, and are very credible organizations. I was very surprised, and by the way, so were they, that they knew nothing about the bill.

A couple of people in my casual conversations about this bill have said that, yes, they've heard about it and they've heard about the changes in directors' liability. One mentioned that they were aware of the changes with regard to the presentation of treasurer's materials prior to an annual general meeting. But it's pretty sketchy, or there's downright total ignorance about this bill.

So while the minister, and I appreciate that he would, wants to emphasize the three years of consultation, it just strikes me as rather surprising that these province-wide organizations certainly were never part of the consultation and were quite surprised and were eager to learn more about it, given that they would be the "beneficiaries" of this legislation.

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The final chapter on the question of the manner in which this bill has been consulted on and presented in the House, and now the guillotine brought down—we learned in committee that, due to the negligent way in which the government approached this bill, even if it is passed in the days coming, it can't be proclaimed for two years. This is just astounding. It's like somebody has to make a career out of this, because this will mean five years of basically behind-the-scenes consultation.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the consultation for publicly elected people like me was one day, but we're going to have five years of closed-door work on this bill—three that the minister explains have taken place, and now two more after we've debated it. It's quite a remarkable thing.

I want to just reiterate what I mentioned a moment ago, the fact that I will be voting in favour of the bill because I do think it is important that not-for-profits can get ready for change. But I must say that the process raises more questions than answers in my mind.

Bill 65 replaces legislation governing non-profits that, in fact, has changed little in 50 years, and at the same time the responsibility of the non-profits and the charitable organizations has grown immensely over a number of years. Much more complex services are provided by not-for-profits. There's also the fact that there's a very big difference between non-profit organizations like private clubs or organizations that are simply providing an umbrella for a group of people engaged in a particular

interest or activity and those which provide services to the community—very complex services, in some cases.

I think of the kind of training that volunteers undertake to participate. Whether it's something like the York Region Abuse Program or something like hospice, these organizations have quite extensive training for volunteers, as do many others. So it seems to me that it's appropriate that the government should be looking at these kinds of complex organizations that exist throughout the province because, quite frankly, we couldn't do without them.

One of the most important things about this bill is the creation of a new concept for Ontarians: the public benefit corporation. I think we need to understand that this is perhaps, in broad terms, the most important part of this piece of legislation, so much so that I want to take a moment just to give you the definition according to the bill itself. It says: "public benefit corporation" means:

"(a) a charitable corporation, or

"(b) a non-charitable corporation that receives more than \$10,000 in a financial year,

"(i) in the form of donations or gifts from persons who are not members, directors, officers or employees of the corporation, or

"(ii) in the form of grants or similar financial assistance from the federal government or a provincial or municipal government or an agency of any such government...."

I think it's really important to understand this creation of a public benefit corporation. In committee, the government amended the definition of a charitable corporation under the act to include "other charitable purpose" as part of the definition. At the committee hearing, the legal counsel from the Ministry of Consumer Services stated, "Over the years, the courts have expanded the category of types of activities that are considered charitable. For example, many years ago, environmental activities would not have been considered charitable, and they are now. So it's flexible enough to accommodate future judicial decisions as to what constitutes a charitable activity or not."

This means that the definition of a not-for-profit corporation is now out of the government's hands and in the hands of the courts. I found that extremely unusual and certainly, I think, somewhat disturbing, because obviously what this tells us is that you now have the power in the courts to determine what is charitable. When I think about the vast range of not-for-profits that operate in our community—in the arts, in sports and in so many fields—are they going to have to line up and go to court to find out whether they are, in fact, legally able to create this public benefit corporation? Maybe that's why they need another two years.

But it certainly has great impact, the creation of the public benefit corporation, because the advantage of the public benefit corporation is that it can have a sort of sister or companion entity that would operate as a for-profit and support the activities of the not-for-profit. I think that we need to look at that, because this could have

a great effect, obviously, on one of the concerns I have with the bill: the ability of non-profits to compete with the private sector without a level playing field. Obviously, this could apply to many more areas of activity than currently depend on court judgments in the future.

This bill raises another area, and that is the growing field of social entrepreneurship. The Ontario Nonprofit Network told the committee: "Social enterprise is a growing component of our sector. The ability to earn funds and to try and make our own way, as government funding decreases and as charitable donations stagnate, is critical, especially for the small and medium-sized organizations—that they are able to forge their enterprises in local communities."

This is a significant departure from what we have today, and again, it raises a number of questions in terms of the role that this entity would play and how it might affect not only the question of government funding, the question of the role of the voluntary sector and the donations—all of that obviously has serious implications. It also raises issues with regard to the private sector.

I think that the best picture of this was presented in the committee for us and to us by the Ontario Funeral Service Association. They explained the risk that allowing social entrepreneurship to compete on an uneven playing field poses to the private sector: "This act has significant impact on our business"—that is the funeral service association. "We are concerned about the blurring of lines between not-for-profits and for-profits as it relates specifically to the bereavement sector and specifically funeral services. Unlike in the past, funeral homes and cemeteries will soon be permitted to operate in combination.

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"To explain further, the bereavement sector includes funeral homes and cemeteries. The problem that follows is that the cemetery industry is dominated by not-for-profits and charitable organizations. These cemetery operators are looking to increase their revenues by entering into the commercial funeral service businesses. As operators under not-for-profit or charitable status, these entities have significant tax advantages over the for-profit funeral operators. We are concerned and we need you to be aware of the unintended consequences of this decision and this" bill.

"When not-for-profit enterprises and for-profit enterprises compete, not-for-profit enterprises act more like for-profit enterprises...."

"A heightened revenue focus and the new-found ability to sell funeral services have forced several not-for-profit cemeteries to adopt aggressive marketing practices. Most large charitable and non-profit cemeteries in Ontario now require all families to attend their cemetery offices in person in order to authorize prepaid opening of graves. Upon entering the cemetery offices, families are required to meet with family services counsellors, who are commissioned sales agents charged with the responsibility of selling, upselling and cross-selling families on cemetery properties, vaults, crypts, visitation services, urns, flowers and the like. Traditionally, these

at-need cemetery arrangements were arranged by fax or by phone.

"Further, the recent implementation of the HST has resulted in religious cemeteries with charitable status having a 13% advantage over their not-for-profit and for-profit competitors on cemetery services. This 13% advantage will spill over to funeral services when regulation permits these same cemeteries to enter into the funeral service industry.

"Pricing at these cemeteries is in line with their for-profit competitors. However, they benefit from tax advantages—income tax, property tax and, in the case of charities, also HST. The cost savings from their preferred tax status is not passed on to consumers, but used for large-scale marketing campaigns. We've circulated some of those marketing materials. They also use billboards and so forth in many of the communities.

"Clearly, if the not-for-profit and charitable cemetery service providers continue to enter the funeral service industry under an unfair taxation regime, a significant shift will occur in Ontario's funeral service industry within just a few years. Main Street funeral homes will not be able to compete."

I quote this because I think it gives people an idea of how something that has the good intentions of updating the not-for-profit sector, of updating the question of charitable status, of being able to provide an entity such as the public benefit corporation—all of which people, I think, appreciate in its intent. But when you start looking at the potentially devastating impact these kinds of ideas have on legitimate service industries or other for-profit activities, then we have a concern, because then we're looking at a bill that is going to pick winners and losers; that's going to have issues for the viability of legitimate industry. We have concerns about that, and certainly, I wish that in the three years of consultation that the government undertook, it included not only those agencies that I referenced at the beginning but also the private sector. Where is the ground upon which everyone can benefit?

At this particular point, I'm very much in favour of the two years the government needs before they proclaim the bill. It's really hard to imagine that they have not done a consultation in those three years that would have included such issues as this.

I should also say that I did, in the clause-by-clause, suggest some amendments to the bill that were suggested by the funeral service industry, which obviously appreciates, I think as we do, the intent of having a public benefit corporation but wants to see a level playing field. Their suggestions included things like:

- a requirement that the dominant purpose of a not-for-profit or charitable corporation be non-commercial;

- a requirement that the business activity of a not-for-profit or charitable corporation be exclusively limited to those business activities that are incidental or ancillary to its objective;

- any incidental or ancillary business activity should be subject to an express cap of \$500,000, in keeping with the audit requirements already set out in the act;

- revenue over and above the \$500,000 cap should be taxed on par with regular commercial income;

- all commercial activities not incidental and ancillary to the dominant purpose of the not-for-profit or charitable corporation should not receive beneficial tax treatment and should be subject to regulations appropriate to such activities. This could involve the mandatory use of subsidiary or affiliate corporations; and finally

- a requirement of full public financial reporting in keeping with the public interest in the use and preservation of publicly subsidized assets.

These amendments were presented by me in the clause-by-clause, and I had hoped that the government might see fit to look at some of these, particularly the question of providing transparency in financial dealings. Unfortunately, the government chose not to pass any of these.

I think that it's really important that the government, by its own admission, is looking at another two years for this bill. They've got to look at and have to ask about what other private sector industries will find themselves in competition with untaxed non-profits in the future. This is why it's unfortunate that this conversation didn't take place in the three years preceding, but given that they are looking at another two years, it would be my hope that they will consider those things that we have brought to the public eye and will use the time.

The reason that the ministry gave to the committee: "There have been discussions with just about every ministry in the Ontario government about working together to do a comprehensive review of all the statutes that contain cross-references to the current Corporations Act." The senior counsel then went on to explain the fact that this cross-referencing process will take approximately two years. He also went on to say, "Each ministry will review its own statutes and regulations that contain such cross-references and consult with appropriate stakeholders with a view to recommending that all these changes be made prior to proclamation of the bill, which, as the parliamentary assistant mentioned, will take approximately two years."

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As I conclude my remarks, I'm still left with the question of why the government didn't figure this out beforehand. What did they do for those three years? Clearly, it's a demonstration of a very sloppy approach to what I believe is not only an appropriate move, in terms of bringing this legislation up to date, but also one that has to be done in consultation with everybody. You can't have people affected adversely by this. I do believe that the intent is appropriate, but it behooves government to answer the question of unintended consequences. Clearly, this bill demonstrates that there has been little, if no regard, to the issue of unintended consequences.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is, at the end of the day, a pretty benign bit of legislation—hardly the second com-

ing of Christ, as was suggested in its introduction. New Democrats are going to support it.

I wonder if the member from York-Simcoe would please lend me her references to the comments made by the Ontario Funeral Service Association, because I do want to speak to those.

I do note that the bill, when it was first introduced—I should mention that when it was first introduced, of course, it was in the name of the member for Hamilton Mountain, who was then the Minister of Consumer Services and who, as Minister of Revenue, is in the House. She does more House duty than any other member of that cabinet. She does. There's some slackers in that cabinet and the Minister of Revenue has to pick up their slack.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, the slackers are the ones who are never here, Mr. Delaney. It's just mind-boggling—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Two things: One is that we don't refer to whether other members are here or not—they could be in committee or in their offices, working hard; secondly, please use the honourable member's title or riding name.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're as astute a Speaker as this chamber has ever had. You're quick on your feet; that's why we like you. We need you to keep that up.

Here we've got the Minister of Revenue who does far more than her share of House duty, while other members of the Premier McGuinty cabinet are slackers. She's here. Perhaps the sponsor of the bill would like to hear the comments during third reading. Here's the Minister of Revenue, who introduced the bill, and I know for a fact that in her heart she thought this bill—because that's what she had been told by her bureaucrats. That's what she had been told by her political staffers, that this bill was as complete and perfect a package as could ever be presented to any assembly.

I note that on third reading it's no longer the member for Hamilton Mountain who is identified as the sponsor of the bill, but the current Minister of Consumer Services, who became the Minister of Consumer Services after the member for Hamilton Mountain was promoted to Minister of Revenue from Minister of Consumer Services. Then the member from Kingston moved from the Ministry of the Environment, after the fiasco around those fees, to the Ministry of Consumer Services. His name is now on the bill.

It suggests the sort of tension that takes place in Hollywood from time to time, where a scriptwriter or a director or a producer is so disgusted at the final product that they insist that their name no longer be on the movie titles; where they literally sue to have their name taken off the end of the movie where it shows producer, scriptwriter and so on, because they say, "I don't want my name associated with that anymore. It's a dog's breakfast after that film editor got finished with it. It's not what I envisioned."

I can't speak for her; she will speak for herself in a capable way. But I suspect the Minister of Revenue is as pleased as anybody could be that it's no longer her name

on this bill but rather, it's the name of the new Minister of Consumer Services. This was a most inelegant process that we witnessed in committee.

Let's put it in context. You'll recall we were just about wrapping up for the summer break, and the government was bungling the Marin affair, the matter of the appointment of a new Ombudsman here in the province of Ontario. The government was engaged in a smear campaign of Mr. Marin. And Mr. Marin was being subjected to some of the most scurrilous and libellous accusations imaginable from government sources and Liberal insiders—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, that's the problem. The interjection will be noted on Hansard.

These sources didn't name their own names. They were gutless Liberal insiders and gutless government sources. They didn't have the courage of their convictions, although most of them should have been convicted for what they attempted to do to Mr. Marin. At the end of the day, the government was engaged in this rather futile effort to block the reappointment of outstandingly and eminently capable André Marin as Ombudsman. In the course of that, the government House leader had engaged in some of the public discourse in the media about Mr. Marin and purported to indicate what had happened in the course of the hiring process in the Speaker's committee. That was the tripartite committee that was charged with interviewing candidates and recommending the next Ombudsman.

At some point, a point of privilege was made in the House which alleged that the government House leader had breached parliamentary convention, that it demonstrated contempt of Parliament by her public proclamation of what she purported to be events within the committee. At the same time, the official opposition got into a real kicking, biting, gouging tussle with the government House leader over an opposition day—the proverbial all Hades broke loose. The government House leader was fit to be tied. She wasn't in good humour at all and I understand that.

This bill that everybody supported, this Bill 65, got time allocated. Whacko, isn't it? It's nuts. It got time allocated. Time allocate, fine, but then the government in it—I say sarcastically—wisdom, not only time allocated it, but said that during the peak of the summer months, the committee was to go out to Kingston, as I recall, and Kitchener. I think Sudbury was on the list and one other city that I can't even remember.

We got notice, of course, of the time allocation motion. I went over to the government House leader, who was barely speaking to me at the time. The smoke was coming out of her ears. She was really ticked off. She was upset. I understand. She was under a lot of pressure because of the Marin affair and the fight with the official opposition and her inability—because the official opposition was digging in its heels—that's the Tories—and not letting her bills pass smoothly. People had to stay here into the evening, as I recall. People get cranky in the

evening, and sometimes they have inappropriate suppers, and all that does is fuel—I use that word advisably—the temperament or ill temper of the chamber.

I suggested to her, “Look, why don’t you let the committee decide where it’s going to go. Let’s see what the response is.” I mean, I don’t mind Kitchener. I don’t mind Kingston. I don’t mind Sudbury. Heck, I don’t mind Cochrane. I don’t mind Timmins. I don’t mind anywhere in Ontario. I’ve been to darned near most of it. Far be it for me to badmouth any part of it. I mean, I think I’m blessed to be from probably one of the nicest parts of Ontario, the Niagara region, but, heck, those other places are nice too.

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The government House leader snorted and was very curt in saying, “No,” or words to that effect. “No.” Okay, fine. God bless.

We have a subcommittee meeting. Of course, the government advertises. The government spends a huge amount of money advertising in each one of these communities—taxpayers’ money—this government that insists it’s so frugal. Well, hell’s bells. At the end of the day, there was nobody who wanted to meet with the committee in Kitchener, and I think one person from Sudbury; I don’t know if there were any from Kingston. At the end of the day, the committee didn’t go anywhere but sit in Toronto.

It could have been so much more effective. I was enthusiastic about public hearings. I thought there would be a whole lot of organizations that would have an interest in this bill, because they’re these non-profit organizations that the bill is designed to accommodate.

Let me tell you about the decidedly inelegant process that we witnessed in committee. But before I do that, first of all, let me thank the member from York—Simcoe, who just spoke on behalf of the Conservatives, who was a delight to work with on the committee. Let me thank the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, who had to fill in for the parliamentary assistant with short notice, and he did a very good job. It was a pleasure to work with him on the committee. He was a gentleman, he was co-operative and he made the process work far better than it would have, had there been any other number of people, who I will not name, because everybody knows who they are. Of course, it would be unparliamentary for me to name Rick Johnson as the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, so I won’t. But I do appreciate the cordial way in which—and he’s not in. Somebody can refer him to the Hansard, and he can feel free to use it in a householder if he wishes.

So here we are: We had this committee process and we had a Chair—I’ve got to tell you about the Chair. The Chair had his stopwatch and he was going to use military precision. He was very anal about the whole thing, to the point of stopping—I don’t mind if somebody’s telling me my time’s up. Good for them, and fine for me. But we’d have public presenters, and mid-sentence he’d say, “Oh, that’s it,” almost Mussoliniesque—except the day when he showed up late. Of course, those who live by the

sword die by the sword. Apparently, his stopwatch wasn’t working that day. People who want to be so anally timely have got to be careful, because, like Bob Dylan said, if you live outside the law, you must be honest.

What we learned in committee, though, were some interesting things, not so much about what was in the bill, but about what wasn’t in the bill.

But before I get to that, let’s talk a little bit about the Ontario Funeral Service Association presentation. I thought this was going to be pretty bland stuff, pretty mediocre. I thought it was going to be unlikely to generate any excitement on my part, because I’m not a particularly excitable kind of guy. But the Ontario Funeral Service Association provided one of the more bizarre presentations. It was very, very interesting.

I think that industry is interesting in and of itself: all the feigned interest in the welfare of families of dead people, when in fact the interest is to sell them the most expensive package available, and a coffin that costs far more than most families can afford and will be buried in the vault and will rot away, just like the body does.

So here’s the Ontario Funeral Service Association worried about the blurring of lines between not-for-profits and for-profits and then moaning and groaning and whinging about not-for-profits being in the industry, and then actually explaining how these charitable and non-profit cemeteries require families to attend their cemetery offices in person in order to authorize prepaid opening of graves and require them to meet with family services counsellors—the industry creates these labels. “Family services counsellor” sounds very benign and supportive. You know the demeanour—I don’t know the exact gesture, but sort of hands like this—in the funeral industry, the sotto voce, soft-spoken, and the light touches on the shoulder.

Look, car salesmen have their gig; people in the funeral industry have their gig. I understand it.

But then, the shock and horror of the Ontario Funeral Service Association in saying that these family services counsellors, who are really commissioned sales agents—oh, my—they’re charged with the responsibility of up-selling and cross-selling families on cemetery properties, vaults, crypts, visitation services, urns, flowers and the like. Well, when it came time to question this presenter on behalf of the Ontario Funeral Service Association, I said, “But isn’t that what the private sector does?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, why is it so cheesy for the non-profit to do it, but it’s not cheesy when you guys do it? Cut it out.” It is cheesy across the board.

This presenter gave us—and again, he was selective in what he gave us—a couple of the glossy, multicoloured brochures that are used by the Catholic cemeteries in Toronto. They’re not the best-prepared pamphlets. They breached some of the basic copyrighting rules in terms of how you prepare a brochure or a pamphlet. One of them was this hard text, and you cut the postcard out and mail it in—because, of course, they want your name on a mailing list. Politicians know that. We do that all the time. We send out a householder or a pamphlet that has a

tear-off on it. We want to collect the names. And increasingly valuable are the email addresses, because it's far less expensive to contact people by email than by post. A posted letter ends up costing as much as a buck a pop, whereas email is almost free, other than the cost of the service. You build up these—I know there are people here who can help me with the language—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Databases.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —databases, my mentor on IT tells me. You can gang-email or you can blast—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Broadcast.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —broadcast—thank you—1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000. Obama used it very successfully in the United States during his presidential campaign, and it's obviously going to become *au courant* increasingly in Ontario and Canada.

So they want you to clip out the card. It says, "Please send me your free DVD, Holy Ground, and Catholic cemetery planning package with information" about any number of cemeteries. The postcard isn't so that they can send you a DVD; it's so that they can get your name, address and—oh, yes—email. This isn't about offering you the service of a free DVD; it's about adding you to their database.

Interjection: It's the same thing your party does.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But you get the free DVD.

This is very much like those early Sunday mornings on the high channels of UHF—there used to be UHF; everybody's got cable now—with the obscure southern preachers who are going to send you some holy water in a little vial that came from Jerusalem, like Ernest Angley. He's got a wig now. He's the guy who whacks you on the forehead. You put your forehead against the TV screen; he's going to heal you. People watch this stuff. These shysters milk people out of thousands and thousands of millions of dollars. From time to time, they appropriately go to jail, like Jim Bakker did. Jim Bakker went to jail and did a little bit of cell time. Tammy Bakker walked—but she's dead. Let's not speak ill of the dead. She collapsed under all that makeup, I suppose.

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So you get a free DVD, and basically all they want is your death.

But take a look at this: "If you make prearrangements with Catholic Cemeteries, we will enter both of your names in a draw to receive a pilgrimage to Rome in 2010." This is incredible. I guess the goal is that they want you to make the prearrangements early enough so that you live long enough to do the pilgrimage. This was cheesy. There are better words, but they're probably unparliamentary. This is cheesy stuff. This guy is whining but he's acknowledging that the private sector does this, too.

"Our mausoleums offer sacred ground that is consecrated by the Catholic church." I don't know what the heck that means. I don't know what that means.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: If you were a Catholic, you would.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am a Catholic, and I don't know what difference it makes when you're rotting in the

ground. I have no idea how it makes a difference that the ground is consecrated or not, especially if you've been—when you're burned, when you go in—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Cremation.

Mr. Peter Kormos: When you're cremated. And I'm not even convinced that in a cremation it's really grandma's dust. It's like a shovelful for this urn and a shovelful for that urn.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: How are they going to tell the difference?

And then the closing line: "At the end of life, the church makes one last act of love by providing holy ground for us to rest and await the resurrection." Does anybody really believe that you're resting at that point? You're dead, and I think fair-minded and enlightened Ontarians, when they die, expect their bodies to be opened up so you can retrieve any organs that are useful. Maybe you consider whether or not that body or cadaver is of any use to a medical school like McMaster University medical school.

And then, when push comes to shove—and I can't speak for other people—take my organs, take my 1995 Chev S10 pickup truck. It's running far better than I am. Then cremate me and spread my dust or whoever's ashes they happen to be over, I don't know, the bush down in Cooks Mills. It would be fine by me.

But I found it remarkable that the private funeral service association would take offence at the Catholic Cemeteries for their pitch, when their pitch is no different from what the Ontario Funeral Service Association admittedly do in their own right in the for-profit sector.

I would hope that if you have non-profit funeral services, they would help reduce the cost. I understand that these promotions are for prearranged funerals, but families are suffering. They're mourning when somebody dies in the family, and they go to a funeral service arranger, a funeral service whatever, and with all the feigned sympathy and comforting—"because we're counsellors; we help you through your grief"—the goal of the agenda is to take as much of your money as they can. I find that offensive. Send letters if you want, but don't bother. It's not going to change my mind. I believe this.

I've witnessed, sadly, families who have been lured into spending far more on a funeral. Funerals are expensive to begin with. For me, a funeral has this function: It's all about public safety. You don't want to bury bodies in the ground—that's why we have regulations around cemeteries and funerals, because presumably it causes and spreads disease and death and so on.

Time is fleeting. I wanted to talk about the inelegance of this legislation. The government was forced into making numerous amendments to the bill, amendments that were demanded by parties like the architects of Ontario; certified general accountants; certified management accountants; chartered accountants; the Law Society of Upper Canada; the professional engineers; parties

affected by the Public Accounting Act, which are all those previous accountants; and by veterinarians.

I don't know who drafted this legislation. I suspect it has been floating around that ministry for a good chunk of time in various forms. Heck, it could even go back to Ernie Eves's day for all I know, because the whole business of updating this Corporations Act is not a particularly new one. But they overlooked the fact that the act could well override the corporate structures of those various bodies.

It was interesting, because here we had second reading of the bill already and we were in committee. Now, first I asked the law society, "Where the heck have you guys been? You've been sitting on your hands? Don't you take a look at this stuff after it receives first reading? What's the matter with you?" You've got all that money that they take from lawyers—I pay mine every year—and they hadn't taken a look at the act.

The government had to move amendments, but I said, "Aha. The problem is that those amendments will probably be out of order because they amend legislation"—because, you see, they amend what was necessary to amend the Law Society Act, the Chartered Accountants Act, the Certified Management Accountants Act or the Architects Act. They were amendments to those acts that had to be incorporated into this act, Bill 65, by way of amendment, but they would be out of order because it would be introducing new areas that Bill 65 hadn't contemplated.

Sure enough, when the government came with the amendments, they were out of order. But, being the kind of accommodating guy I am—because that's my style. You know my style is not confrontational or adversarial; my style is collaborative. It has been that way as long as I can remember. Being the kind of accommodating guy I am, I gave unanimous consent for the government to move those amendments and cleared the path. I'm here to serve, Speaker. Please don't ever misconstrue me as an obstructionist.

I find myself with time left. I'll resume this at the next occasion when this bill is called for the balance of my 13 minutes and 45 seconds.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome John Chan, who is joining us today in the members' gallery. John is here to watch his nephew, page Brandon Chan, who is from my riding of St. Paul's. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'd like to welcome, in the east gallery, Kathleen Rempel, the mother of page Emily Rempel, here from Wilmot township. Welcome today, Kathleen.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Elly Vandenberg, who is on her way in at any moment, together with her mum, Margo Vandenberg. They are the mum and grandma of our page Tom Davidson, who is celebrating his last day with us today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I would like to welcome Rowena Ramos, who is the mother of page Rodney Ramos. Since I have met Rodney on a number of occasions, I can tell his mother, you can be extremely proud of your son Rodney Ramos. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Windsor West and page Ioana Crant, we'd like to welcome her mother, Aurelia Crant, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, Ontario families want to know who handed out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants in the eHealth scandal. Today, the Ontario PC leader announced that, if elected Premier, he will call a public inquiry into the consultant contract spending spree and rot at eHealth. Why won't Premier McGuinty do the same thing today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm delighted, again, to speak to the issue of eHealth and to take the opportunity to impress upon my honourable colleagues opposite why it is we are working so hard to move forward to put in place an electronic record system for health care in the province of Ontario.

What we're talking about is ensuring that your health care provider, whether that's your family doctor, the emergency department doctor, your home care nurse or your pharmacist, has access to the right information at the right time so we can give you the best possible care.

All thoughtful people when it comes to these matters tell us that this is the very foundation for a modern, reliable, efficient, effective health care system. So I would ask my honourable colleague to stand up and say that they will reverse their position; they will now in fact support an electronic health records system in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The choice Ontario families face is clear, and that's what we're really talking about here: They can choose Ontario PCs, who say we need legislation to stop money for front-line care being used by hospitals to lobby government, or Premier McGuinty, who said all week that he deplores the practice, only to have his caucus vote against bringing forward legislation. Ontarians can choose a PC leader, who will call a public inquiry into eHealth, or Premier McGuinty, who will not do so.

Ministers on the Management Board of Cabinet waived competitive bidding rules and paved the way for

eHealth to hand out sweetheart deals to consulting firms with ties to the McGuinty Liberals. Premier, how much did you make Ontario families pay to the Liberal family for sweetheart deals exempted by Management Board?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleague is not prepared to accept the report put out by the Provincial Auditor, but we are. We've accepted that advice, those recommendations, those findings, and we're acting on all of them.

Let me again tell you why it's so important that we move ahead with an eHealth system in the province of Ontario and the progress, in particular, that we are making. In 2006, 770,000 Ontarians had electronic medical records. Today it's nearly five million. By 2011 it will be seven million. By 2012 it will be 10 million. I think that represents real progress and I would ask my honourable colleagues opposite to get on board and help us modernize our electronic health records system in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, I'm certainly happy that the Premier mentioned the auditor's report, because the auditor's report also mentions that one consulting firm was given special treatment when it was handed a disproportionate number of sweetheart deals while this government waived the rules. When we asked the Premier who handed how many deals to whom, he just stonewalled. Now the Ontario PC caucus has uncovered documents which reveal that Ontario families paid \$9.5 million for 48 more contracts handed out while the rules were waived. Premier, how much of that was handed to consultants with Liberal ties?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague, because she appears to have forgotten one of the specific statements made by the auditor in his report—

Interjection.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And I know that my honourable colleague from the Ottawa Valley is going to want to pay attention to this.

He said this: "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work." I think it's pretty conclusive.

I think our shared responsibility now is to find a way to move forward on behalf of the people of Ontario and ensure that we have in place an electronic health records system. That's what we are doing. We will not take our eye off the ball. Again, I would encourage my honourable colleagues opposite to join with us in this very important effort.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question, again, is to the Premier. Maybe Premier McGuinty is adamantly opposed to a public inquiry because he has a "more intelligent

understanding" of McGuinty Liberals who helped other McGuinty Liberals get rich in the \$1-billion eHealth scandal.

The documents we uncovered showed that Management Board ministers had a hand in over \$5 million lining the pockets of John Ronson, Karli Farrow and other Liberal-friendly consultants at Courtyard. For anyone who forgets, Ronson was your election campaign chair and Farrow was a senior political advisor in the Premier's office before serving as chief of staff to George Smitherman.

Are Courtyard consultants the only Liberals who cheated Ontario families in the eHealth spending spree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can appreciate that my honourable colleagues opposite have their own particular perspective on this and that is, at times, very partisan. I mean, that's just the nature of the work that we do here. But I think Ontarians are entitled to rely from time to time on an objective, third party, expert observer of these matters, and I want to repeat what the auditor specifically said: "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

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Notwithstanding the fact that they continue to make the claims, the auditor found otherwise. He's a distinguished officer of this Legislative Assembly. I think we're entitled to place our confidence in him, and I, for one, will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Premier would know that the issues he's speaking about were outside the Auditor General's mandate.

But here's the reason why the Premier won't call an inquiry into eHealth: The documents our caucus uncovered include a four-month deal worth \$122,000 that was handed to the Premier's friends at Courtyard. The deal was signed off by Phil DeMont. DeMont was a political aide in George Smitherman's office at the time and he later ended up in Minister Papatello's office. Which other McGuinty Liberals handed out sweetheart deals to other McGuinty Liberals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague is not prepared to accept the word of the auditor, and I am. I think there we'll have to part company.

With respect to just how important eHealth is for us, so far there are over 7,500 sites in Ontario that have been linked by eHealth. I'm talking about doctors' offices, hospitals, nurse-practitioner-led clinics and the like.

What we're doing here is ensuring, for example, that if you are receiving care in a northern or rural community in the province of Ontario through our eHealth system, that you have access to the best possible expertise that may be found in a larger urban centre.

It's not just a matter of ensuring that every Ontarian has their own electronic medical record, but also ensuring that those doctors and nurses who practise in remote and

northern communities have access to the best expertise. That's what this is all about, and that is why it's so important that we keep moving ahead with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We agree that there's no question that electronic health records are absolutely necessary, but the rate at which Ontario is proceeding with the development of eHealth records is laughable in most of the world.

The reason why the Ontario PC leader will call a public inquiry is because the rot in the eHealth scandal has crept right into the McGuinty Liberal ministers' offices. It's highly improper for political staff to approve contracts like these, but you wouldn't know it from what Premier McGuinty has had to say about the eHealth scandal to date.

The documents we obtained show that Phil DeMont is not the only McGuinty Liberal who handed out sweetheart deals to other McGuinty Liberals. Gail Paech, who just endorsed George Smitherman, handed out 20 more sweetheart deals worth \$5.7 million to Courtyard. Why is it that Premier McGuinty is the only one who knows the whole story about eHealth and he's not talking?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm reminded of something once said by former US Senator—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry, Premier. The member from Renfrew would be best in his own seat.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's never any shortage of energy from that particular gentleman, Speaker.

I'm reminded of something said by former US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He used to say, "Everyone is entitled to their own opinions but not their own facts."

I think when it comes to the facts, we're entitled to rely on that important finder of facts, the Provincial Auditor. He made a specific finding of fact that there was no political involvement in the awarding of those contracts. Now, we're prepared to accept that finding, but my honourable colleague is not.

Again, I think what our responsibility is today—and I say this is a shared responsibility, a broader responsibility—is to put in place an electronic health records system. It's the foundation for a modern, efficient, effective, reliable system to benefit all Ontarians.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Yesterday, the Premier said, "Ontario tax dollars are not to be used by the broader public sector and agencies to lobby their government in order to secure still more funding," and "We believe that is a matter of principle.... We find it unacceptable."

Does the Premier still agree that this is not just unacceptable but also an issue of principle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We certainly do. There has been a long-standing practice accepted by the previous two governments, and we're saying no to that practice. We want to make a change in Ontario. We intend to introduce a new initiative that will prohibit those kinds of activities. We've been clear that nobody should be using taxpayer dollars to hire a lobbyist to ask for more taxpayer dollars. That's just not sensible. It's not in keeping with our standards and our values.

Families and taxpayers expect that those dollars will go into front-line services. That's what we intend to realize through our new initiative when we present it in this House

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Surely the Premier was not surprised to find out that this practice was going on.

The lobbyist registry shows that from 2007 to 2010, Bob Chiarelli, the Minister of Infrastructure, was a lobbyist for the publicly funded Algonquin College. It turns out he had a lucrative, \$7,500-a-month contract with the college. The Ottawa Citizen went so far as to write an editorial in 2007, condemning the arrangement.

How can the Premier seriously claim that banning lobbyists in the public sector is an issue of principle when he recently promoted to cabinet someone who was doing exactly that just nine months ago?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Hot potato, for sure. Were you sitting on a hot potato there?

Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I don't think the member of the third party clearly understands what we're saying. We don't endorse the idea of public entities using public dollars to lobby for public dollars. We've said that over and over and over again.

The minister is going to be introducing legislation with real teeth to it, not motions that are politically based. We're talking about legislation that has real teeth to it, because we understand what the people of Ontario want: not frivolous motions, but real opportunity for growth, real opportunity for opportunity, real opportunity for public dollars to be used in a very effective way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's surprising that the Premier didn't continue to answer this question, but I will go back to him.

The infrastructure minister announced his intention to run in a by-election on January 18, while he was still an active, registered lobbyist acting on behalf of public sector clients. The Premier yesterday claimed this was an issue of principle for him.

To the Premier: When did it become a principle for him?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me reinforce a message that has been given from this side of the House by the

Premier and by several ministers. We believe that public dollars shouldn't be used to advocate for public dollars.

We believe that by introducing strong legislation, we will not repeat the mistakes of previous governments: the previous NDP government and, for sure, the previous Harris-Hudak regime.

We're not about repeating mistakes; we're about ensuring we build a stronger system for the future that's open and accountable.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier's representative on earth is trying to give us the impression that the Premier is surprised to hear that such a practice has gone on in this province.

This week, New Democrats exposed a government that has cultivated a culture that puts insiders ahead of everyone else, a government that is more concerned with rewarding friends than with improving health care or making university education more affordable.

Why hasn't the Premier completely banned the use of lobbyists in the public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that in fact we are moving forward on that score and that we look forward to doing that. We're open to any advice and suggestions that they may put forward.

But I want to make it clear again: The practice that had been extant during the previous two governments is unacceptable to us. It's not in keeping with the standards of Ontarians. It's not in keeping with their values, whether in their capacity as families or as taxpayers.

We think it's inappropriate to lobby the provincial government in order to obtain taxpayer dollars when you're working for an organization which is already paid for by taxpayer dollars. We're going to make some changes to prohibit that practice, and again, we're open to suggestions and advice that the opposition may offer.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: For the Premier: StrategyCorp, a lobbying firm made up of former Liberal insiders, has contracts with publicly funded organizations worth at least \$400,000. That's a very generous public subsidy, Premier, money that could be used to hire more nurses or help students get through college.

When will the Premier introduce the legislation that will turn off this tap to lobbyists in the public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm concerned that my colleagues opposite can't take yes for an answer.

We are moving forward with specific initiatives to address these very kinds of issues. We are saying that the practice that was permitted by the former NDP and Conservative governments is unacceptable; it's not in keeping with our standards today, so we're going to be making changes to put those values into place and we will prohibit the practice which, as I say, had been acceptable in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You know, the opposition can understand "yes" when it hears "yes," but it also understands that if it doesn't hear a date, then the "yes" could sort of float off into the future. While the Premier is making vague commitments, Ontario families are wondering when the public subsidy to insider lobbyists will finally end. Later today we'll be introducing a bill to ban the use of lobbyists by publicly funded organizations. Is the government prepared to support the bill today or can we expect more dither and delay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the effort and the initiative pursued by the representative of the third party, and we look forward to seeing the contents of the bill, but I want to assure him and reassure Ontarians that we in government will be moving forward with our own specific initiative.

I also want to remind my honourable colleagues opposite of some of the things that we have already done. We have reduced government-wide use of consultants by more than 54% since 2002. In just the last year, the use of consultants is down by 25%; travel expenses, by the way, are down by 23%; government advertising spending is down by 20%; and when it comes to consulting, our government spending per capita is 30% below the average of all the other provincial governments.

By the way, every time we put forward an initiative to introduce more transparency and more accountability, the opposition has stood in the way of that. Again, I look forward to seeing the initiative, but we look forward to introducing ours as well.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier about another out-of-control agency that could learn a few lessons from an inquiry into eHealth practices that got McGuinty Liberals into trouble. I'm talking about Ontario Electronic Stewardship.

Ontario Electronic Stewardship pays the salary of Gordon Day to be its program manager. Gordon Day is also a director of a consulting company called StewardEdge. Since 2007, Ontario Electronic Stewardship has been handing out and renewing consulting deals to StewardEdge. Does it concern Premier McGuinty at all that Gordon Day is handing out consulting contracts to himself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question. First of all, the most important thing we can do is keep hazardous electronic waste out of our landfills. Under the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, that was put into force by the previous government, the solution is found in having an industry-funded organization which is completely run by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister. Please continue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: As I was saying, Ontario Electronic Stewardship is not an agency of the government of Ontario. It is completely funded by industry and it is completely run by industry.

We've been very clear in our ministry that when it comes to these organizations, we will not allow any lobbyists to come and see us on their behalf. Any money that is used to divert waste, that's its function. Its function is not to come back to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It'd be nice if just once that minister would actually answer a question.

A pattern has developed where agency executives hand out sweetheart deals to their own companies and the McGuinty Liberals do nothing to stop it. The pattern began with Michael Guerriere, the eHealth vice-president who handed out sweetheart deals to his own consulting firm, the Liberal Courtyard Group. This spring, we exposed it happening again with a local health integration network CEO who handed a contract to a company he worked for. Now, Gordon Day is handing his own StewardEdge consulting contracts that expand the scope of its work for OES.

If Premier McGuinty won't call a public inquiry into eHealth, what is he doing to stop the rot he has allowed to spread through that government?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find it interesting—I'll just remind the member once again that the Ontario Electronic Stewardship is not an agency of the government of Ontario. Why? Because when you were in government you set it up that way, that it would be completely run by industry and completely funded by industry. Now, if the industries funding and running that organization make decisions, then those questions would rightly go to the Ontario Electronic Stewardship and their board of directors, not to the Minister of the Environment.

But to be clear, when it comes to those arm's-length agencies, we will not, have not and will not deal with lobbyists. There is no need for money that is used for waste diversion to be used—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Sit down, Pontius Pilate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member from Renfrew to withdraw the comment.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'll repeat again: Money that is used to divert waste should not be used to lobby our government, and we've made very clear to all lobbyists that the door is closed at the Ministry of the Environment when it comes to any of these arm's-length, industry-run and industry-funded organizations.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Premier, tenants across Ontario are having a difficult time paying their hydro bills.

Rose Vancea from Fort Erie says: "My electric bill has almost doubled. My daughter's bill for two weeks was \$60 and that was with no air-conditioning or stove as she just moved into the apartment.... She has about \$1,100 a month coming in. Rent is \$600 and then there is cable and food and" the "electric" bill.

When the Ontario Energy Board announces the new winter hydro rates a week from now, will Mrs. Vancea and her daughter get whacked even harder?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you for the question. I think the member was around a few weeks ago when our Premier announced a very significant announcement of relief for Ontario seniors and for 2.8 million middle- and lower-income Ontarians. In total, it's \$1.3 billion in relief that's going to provide some assistance to those families.

That was an indication that we do understand that families across this province have gone through a very difficult time. We've gone through a global recession. We do know that energy rates are rising but we're there to help. We're providing relief for those families.

We're not going to do what the member opposite's leader would want us to do. We're not going to stop investing in our energy system, because that would take us back to where we were seven years ago and the very people he's advocating for now would not have the power they need to raise—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Here is another incredibly sad story. Mrs. Gautreau from Mississauga writes: "[My father] rents a small house in Clarkson that he may lose ... he has lived there for 17 years, and since my mom passed he is barely making it. His hydro is outrageous.

"His bill is in arrears once again and I wish I could pay it for him, but I'm a single mom on a disability pension myself. I wish there was someone out there who really cared," she says.

Tenants need a predictable, permanent, affordable break on their hydro bill. Taking the HST off hydro would do that. How soon can tenants expect that kind of relief?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess the member wasn't listening to my original response. The Ontario energy and property tax credit is a significant level of relief that's going to provide lower- and middle-income families with relief with regard to rising energy costs. It's also going to provide seniors with a significant level of relief. In total, the tax credit which will be going to Ontarians is \$1.3 billion. That's going to help. But we recognize that there's more work to do and we're going to keep working with those families.

1100

What we're not going to do, though, and what the NDP appear to be determined to do, is stop investing in the energy system. That's what the previous government did, as we watched coal go up 127%, as we watched our air being polluted, as we watched the health of the very people that the member advocates for being impacted.

We've got to continue to invest in a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Infrastructure. This past summer, Ontarians marked with sadness the 10th anniversary of the Walkerton disaster in the summer of 2000. This occasion should serve as a reminder to all of us of how vitally important safe drinking water infrastructure is.

As the minister knows, Judge Dennis O'Connor's Walkerton inquiry pointed out that it can be difficult for small communities to provide water service that is both safe and affordable.

My constituents in towns like Blind River, Gore Bay and Spanish have just as much right to clean water as urban Ontarians. So my question is, what is the minister doing to make sure that small communities across Ontario receive the support they need to upgrade their drinking water systems?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question.

Over the summer, Mr. Duguid and I spent considerable time consulting across the province with respect to our new 10-year infrastructure program, which is under construction. Water and wastewater infrastructure came up over and over again, especially with the smaller communities' municipal leaders.

The McGuinty government is already providing \$20 million to 166 small communities to help with the cost of operating their drinking water systems. That's through the Ontario small waterworks assistance program, or OSWAP.

In August, we launched OSWAP's third phase. It's the capital phase, which will provide small communities, like the ones the member mentioned, with funding to upgrade their drinking water and wastewater systems.

I'll tell the members more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Providing safe drinking water to just a few, a few hundred or a few thousand people is more expensive than providing it to tens of thousands of people, because either way, you need—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just heard something that was unparliamentary. Withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'll try again. Providing safe drinking water to just a few, a few hundred or a few thousand people is much more expensive than providing it to tens of thousands of people, because either way, you need expensive machinery and equipment, and in a small community there just aren't as many people to foot the bill.

I know that in my constituency, there are many communities that are struggling to keep up, that are struggling to afford the sophisticated technologies they need to provide their citizens with a safe and reliable supply of water.

Minister, how will OSWAP make these technologies and upgrades more affordable?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: OSWAP will help by providing up to two thirds of the necessary funding for water infrastructure projects in small communities. In order to help even more small communities, we are more than doubling the size of OSWAP's capital component from our previous commitment of \$20 million to more than \$50 million. Not only that, we've also expanded it to cover not only drinking water infrastructure, but wastewater infrastructure too. We've also added a focus on water conservation and water system efficiency. For example, small communities can make their systems cheaper to operate and easier on the environment by upgrading maintenance.

The McGuinty government understands that rural and northern Ontarians in small communities deserve safe, reliable and affordable water service. That's what this program and the McGuinty commitment is all about.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Premier. If Stewardship Ontario has been collecting \$100 of eco tax on cars to cover the cost of diverting antifreeze and fluids in air conditioners for several years now, then why are the McGuinty Liberals planning to introduce a second eco fee on cars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. I'd be more than happy to hear any other information she may have in the supplementary.

I am in the process of doing a 90-day review in regard to all of those agencies.

We have been listening to people, and they've been telling us that they want to do the right thing. They want to keep hazardous materials out of our landfills to make sure that those hazards are not visited on our children or our grandchildren one day. That's why it's so important that we do things that are best for the environment. I know that I am just finishing up that review, and I look forward to sharing that with my colleagues in government and with the good people of Ontario.

But I might add that Stewardship Ontario is like these other arm's-length groups that are funded by industry and completely run by industry. We've had the leadership in to talk to us about what their plans are. Again, I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, since the minister didn't have enough information, I'll give him a little more.

Proof the McGuinty Liberals are planning to introduce a second eco tax on cars can be found on page 30 of the

environment minister's 2009 report, entitled *From Waste To Worth*. The former environment minister lauded a second eco tax on cars as "our proposal for improving the way we manage waste here in Ontario."

Automotive industry stakeholders say the McGuinty Liberals are talking about an eco tax that adds upwards of \$1,000 a car. It's unacceptable. The industry is struggling. Families are struggling. This will kill sales and manufacturing jobs in my riding that families depend on.

Will you do with this eco tax grab what you did with the former environment minister and sweep it aside to gather dust?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Well, there we have it: A report all of a sudden is government policy. I'll tell you that, on this side of the House, we set government policy.

We ask people all the time to give us their best advice, and there is a report that has to do with how we take the concept of waste and turn that into a resource. That is what's required in the 21st century: How do we take things that we're throwing away and turn them into resources?

One of our great examples of that is, now there is this new and ever-growing rubber recycling business in the province of Ontario that's creating jobs as we ensure that used tires, for example, don't go into the back forty, don't go into the dump. They go into new products, turning what was considered waste into a resource, creating new green jobs that are environmentally friendly.

We will continue to receive advice from people, if they want to write a report or if they want to make a recommendation, but we set government policy on this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. In light of the two deaths of Jamaican agricultural workers recently, it's shocking that there have only been 71 farm inspections in four years in Ontario while there are over 60,000 farms. Why has this government inspected so few corporate farms?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is wrong. This government is committed to ensuring that all farm workers are protected, that their health and safety is protected.

Let me share some numbers with the member: 375 field visits last year, and 228 were to crop and animal farming operations. Another 131 were to greenhouse operations, where there were many, many migrant workers employed. That is, on average, a farm visited every single day of the year. The member's numbers are incorrect.

It is this government, in 2006, that brought the Occupational Health and Safety Act to farms to protect farm workers. In this province, a farm worker is a farm worker is a farm worker. Regardless of classification, regardless of status, we want to ensure that they are protected—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will come to order and perhaps be best in his seat.

Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Minister, as you well know, inspectors are telling us that they are told not to inspect farms. Given the number of serious workplace injuries and fatalities occurring on Ontario corporate farms, why is the minister not sending health and safety inspectors to corporate farming operations?

I want to say that his figures are the inaccurate ones. Our figures come through UFCW and are checked out in the field. So I challenge him just on the figures alone, but also on the facts. The fact is, the inspectors are telling us that they're told not even to go to farms. Answer that, Mr. Minister.

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'll stick to the facts. I'll reject what that member has said. She is completely wrong. Again, this is the government that has protected farm workers by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

I smell turkey cooking.

Interjection: Is that Ontario turkey?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Of course it's Ontario turkey.

Minister.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Speaker, thank you very much.

Again, the member is wrong. We've doubled the number of health and safety inspectors in the province of Ontario, and 100 of those inspectors are trained specifically on safe work on farms and to ensure quicker response to concerns. These are the correct numbers, and I'll be more than happy to provide these to the member opposite.

Again, more than one visit to a farm every single day. They are large farms, crop and animal farms, greenhouse operations. There are many migrant workers in those operations. We will continue to ensure that our farms are safe.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Ontario is very fortunate to be protected by our courageous firefighters right across this great province. These brave men and women work every day to ensure our safety and the protection of all Ontarians. In their line of work, firefighters must make split-second decisions before they enter dangerous situations. They risk their very own well-being to help strangers in need of aid and rescue. Not only do our firefighters provide protection, these individuals are integral parts of our society, donating their time and effort to local charities and organizations.

Unfortunately, the reality of the job can create insurmountable risk, taking the lives of some of our finest citizens. I would ask that the Minister of Community

Safety and Correctional Services explain how we honour and recognize these great, valorous fighters of the province of Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for a good question from the member who brought forward a bill in the House to recognize firefighters appropriately.

I was honoured to attend the Ontario firefighter memorial service this past weekend in my new capacity as Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I would like to acknowledge as well those from the Legislature who joined the grieving families and fire services from across the province to honour the fallen. The Premier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other colleagues from both sides of the House were there.

The Ontario firefighter memorial ceremony pays tribute to the memory of those courageous firefighters who died while protecting others. Each name engraved on the memorial represents a life of dedication, heroism and, sadly, a life lost in the service to others.

These were individuals of outstanding character and courage, whose selfless acts made a difference in the lives of people they touched. The legacy of these firefighters lies in the lives they lead and the examples they set for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I know that each and every one of us will be indebted to these individuals, particularly the families they left behind, that they have provided this service to the province of Ontario. I know that in the riding of Brant, our entire community came together to build a safety village, in which the fire department is one of the highest stakeholders.

I know we look forward to the day when no names can be added to the firefighters memorial. Fire safety is a shared responsibility and we must all do our part. It's important that all levels of government, fire experts, caregivers, the private sector, homeowners and residents work together to make that happen.

This past Sunday marked the start of Ontario's Fire Prevention Week, an opportunity for all Ontarians to learn helpful fire safety tips—for instance, smoke detectors, CO detectors and all the information that is needed in order for us to keep ourselves safe.

Would the Minister of Community and Correctional Services please provide us with more details on Fire Prevention Week to help all Ontarians be safe and secure?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is absolutely correct: Our government, along with the fire safety partners we have, are celebrating national Fire Prevention Week. This year's theme is "Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With." Smoke alarms, as I think all of us know, save lives, but a faulty smoke alarm saves nobody.

We are challenging Ontarians during Fire Prevention Week to be fire safe and fire smart by following the following steps: Know what to do when the smoke alarm sounds. Develop a home escape plan with everyone in your household. Make sure you have two ways out of all areas. Keep combustible materials at least one metre

away from space heaters. Never leave candles burning unattended.

Installing smoke alarms is the law in Ontario. At a minimum, every home must have a working smoke alarm on every storey and outside of all sleeping areas. Taking a few minutes to follow these simple steps will most assuredly keep Ontario families safe.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we all know the WSIB is broke and broken; the Auditor General said as much last year. The WSIB's unfunded liability has doubled under your watch, from \$6 billion to \$12 billion, and is growing at a rate of \$1 billion per year. Last February, at the public accounts committee, WSIB chair Mahoney said, "By the fall we will develop a comprehensive go-forward plan." Last week, your WSIB chair revealed his big plan: He's hired Professor Harry Arthurs at \$500 an hour for the next 16 months.

We all know your cabinet is incapable of solving the problems they created for Ontario families. Premier, is there any problem your government creates that a high-priced consultant can't solve?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd be happy to share with the member the importance of the announcement that was made last Thursday by the WSIB. Yes, they have presented a comprehensive plan to retire the unfunded liability. The WSIB has presented a plan that is prudent and responsible, and it's going to put the WSIB on firm financial footing. I want to commend the new president and CEO, David Marshall—he's a former Deputy Auditor General of Canada—for putting that plan together.

It is a comprehensive plan. It is a plan that involves consultation, which is important, and it is what the stakeholders have asked for. We support that plan to put the WSIB on stable footing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: At the standing committee, your new WSIB president said, "I've come into this role as president and CEO of the WSIB with a clear mandate from the minister. It is to build a sound financial plan...." Now we learn that the plan is to have someone else fix the problems.

Premier, you told us that we're going to get a new deal: no more eHealth-style consultants, no more money down the drain. Instead, we get more per diems, more waste and more proof that your government can't solve its own problems. Premier, if all your government does is hire outside consultants to fix the problems you've caused, what exactly are Ontario families paying you for?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's obvious that this member just doesn't get it, but you know what? The Chair of that standing committee, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, does get it, because he said, "What we need is a plan. What we need is a consultation," and that's exactly what has been delivered.

This is a WSIB plan that is prudent and that is responsible. It does have a consultation—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just say to the member from Lanark that he knows the standing orders. He just asked the question, and as always, if he's not satisfied with the answer he can follow with a late show. Please listen to the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The stakeholders, both business and hard-working men and women of Ontario, understand the importance of the WSIB and of this plan. They have asked for a consultation; it's being led by Professor Harry Arthurs. This member may not want somebody competent, with experience, who is somebody who is respected—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. The law in Ontario requires that all residences must have an audible fire alarm. This is of no value to deaf and hard-of-hearing Ontarians. As witnessed by the tragic death of a deaf person in St. Catharines last week, the audible fire alarm was useless, as she couldn't hear it anyway.

The member for Pickering-Scarborough East is re-introducing his visual fire alarm bill because this government didn't act on the proposal in the past and because this government did not let it go to third reading. When will this government take fire safety seriously and protect all citizens equally?

1120

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the member would mischaracterize the government's approach to fire safety if he were to say that, without a doubt. All accidents that happen of this kind, all tragedies of this kind, we feel badly about because there is a loss of lives and so on.

On an ongoing basis we are reviewing with our fire safety partners all of the possible options available to increase fire safety even more. Quite obviously, one of those options is the option to which the member has made reference and on which our member has brought forward a private member's bill. I think there is virtue in it. I know it's been an issue for a number of years: when your government was in power, when that government was in power and now that our government is in power; it has been for a number of years. I am really impressed by the fact that the member has brought this forward. Certainly, in my consultations as a new minister, it is one of the issues I'll be reviewing very, very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The reality is that this government has done little to advance fire safety for Ontarians. It has been left up to individual members and private members' bills to fill the void. First there was the member from Brampton-Springdale, now a minister, who pushed for

sprinklers in new homes. It never happened. My bill banning wooden fire escapes came next. It never happened. Now this government is being asked to act on visual fire alarms. If these bills were the law, deaths would have been prevented as recently as last week. Yet they've been introduced two, three and four times each.

Will this government take any responsibility for improving fire safety, or will the ideas of MPPs and firefighters continue to be ignored?

Hon. James J. Bradley: In fact, I have met with firefighters on issues of fire prevention and fire safety, along with those who are the fire chiefs in the province of Ontario. Some of the things that we've already done, in addition—I think the member raises some very legitimate questions: We have strengthened the Ontario fire code to require working smoke alarms on every storey of a home, for instance; we have updated safety equipment requirements for hotels and motels; we've improved safety in existing care facilities through change to fire safety planning, staff and fire drills; effective April 1, 2010, we amended the Ontario building code, requiring sprinklers in all new residential buildings higher than three storeys; and we distributed an unprecedented \$30 million to fire departments to assist with training, equipment and prevention programs. We've made progress; we want to make even more progress.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Between 2001 and 2006, the number of persons with disabilities in Ontario increased by 22%. About one in seven people in Ontario have disabilities. It is anticipated to grow to one in five within 20 years.

I appreciate the advice I receive from the accessibility advisory council in my riding. They inform me of the accessibility needs in my community now and provide feedback on how our government can help. What is our government doing to address the needs of accessibility in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Northumberland-Quinte West for his advocacy on behalf of his disabled community. He's a great leader in his community.

People with disabilities have long been faced with barriers that limit their ability as individuals and limit our strength as a province. The ODA, introduced in 2001, did not go far enough. In response, our government introduced the AODA in 2005. The AODA will help create inclusion for everyone in Ontario, regardless of their ability, so they can reach their full potential. Ontario is the first jurisdiction in the world to move from complaint-based legislation to a modern regulatory regime in the area of mandated accessibility.

We are proud to take this leadership role and we look forward to other jurisdictions doing the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Madam Minister. I think it's important to share success stories with Ontarians to show how public sector organizations, businesses and schools are providing accessibility services to everyone. By demonstrating what can be achieved when communities break down barriers for people with disabilities, we can encourage others to do the same.

I understand that the minister's website contains many videos that profile such stories. Minister, can you share with us why Ontario is a leader in accessibility and how we can learn more about specific accessibility initiatives?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: My ministry has many videos available on YouTube and our website, profiling many organizations that have become accessible. In fact, I'm happy to say our ministry has a new video available highlighting a school in Northumberland-Quinte West that made their buildings accessible. St. Mary's Elementary School in Campbellford was recently made accessible with the addition of a ramp, an elevator, a Snoezelen room and accessible washrooms. They also received the 2009 Mary Cook Inclusive Education Award from Community Living Campbellford/Brighton for offering integrated education, where students with developmental disabilities are integrated with other students.

I want to thank and commend the principal of the school, Diane Mather, and the member from Northumberland-Quinte West for all they have done to make their community accessible.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, can you explain why your source water protection committees are sending confusing, intimidating and threatening letters to rural Ontario property owners?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm pleased to talk about source water protection. We had a tragedy in this province, and one of the things we learned from Justice O'Connor was about how important it is to keep the sources of our drinking water safe in the first place, that the right thing to do is to do that.

Because of the legislation that we passed following on the work of Justice O'Connor, we've had source water planning protection committees right across the province, making sure that we have the basis in science and making sure that we've done the consultations with people to ensure that we can be stewards of our sources of drinking water. They've been doing a lot of work, and they're coming back to me now with proposals about how they'll give life to that act, to ensure that we are protecting our municipal sources of drinking water. That is our policy objective.

I am proud that we have a program that we instituted in the act that says that we go to local landowners, who are the best stewards of the land, in many cases farmers, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, I have to tell you right up front: Most people in the province of Ontario don't even know these committees exist. There are 19 of them, basically anonymous committees, at work across the province. They have caused significant distress to property owners who are concerned over the level of intrusion on their own property. They're also wondering what new level of water protection—that's above and beyond conservation authorities etc.—they are being subjected to and at what cost it will be.

What authority are those special purpose bodies using to send threatening letters to property owners? And what are you doing to monitor what they are doing and saying to the property owners of the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Perhaps the member wasn't paying attention in the last term, but what we did was we passed an act. I can tell you the terms of reference for our source water planning protection committees were approved by my ministry. They're out doing the work. They now are bringing those plans back to our ministry. I have the legislative authority to approve or to alter those plans. I take that responsibility very seriously. As these plans come back, they have to be approved by our ministry, and then they have to be put into force.

But what I can tell you is that because of funding that we made available to local landowners, they are already doing the things that are required to ensure that the sources of our drinking water are protected. I want to thank every one of those landowners who have used the millions of dollars provided by our government, which they have supplemented with millions of their own dollars because they want to do the right thing. Because though it may be our land, it's our water. It's something that we value, and we want to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. In today's Toronto Star article on the state of home care, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care said, "I need better information. I want to go deeper into the numbers."

I'd like to assist the minister and the Premier on how this government funds home care. First, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care gives the home care money to the 14 local health integration networks. The 14 local health integration networks give the home care money to the 14 community care access centres, minus their admin fees. Then the community care access centres, through an expensive competitive bidding process, give the home care money to—there are many more admin fees and many more profit margins that come in before you're going to see any care at all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and I'll test my own memory here a little bit.

We took a long, hard look at the best way to ensure that we provide the best-quality home care to Ontario families—and obviously, we have an accountability to taxpayers. We ended up with a system which I firmly believe strikes the right balance between assuring us that we can deliver good, quality care—and we give options to people in the services in the community to make application to provide those services.

My honourable colleague takes an ideological position on this, and I just don't think that's a luxury that we enjoy. We've got to be open to various ways to deliver the best quality home care. At the end of the day, there's only one test, and that's the quality of the services being delivered. We keep our eye very closely attuned to those developments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The home care system is broken. We are not getting quality care through all of this long process that we go through. Everybody will tell you that because of the competitive bidding process, home care agencies are not able to retain and recruit a stable workforce. Quality care comes through continuity of care, which comes through continuity of caregivers. If you cannot keep a stable workforce, you cannot give quality care. The people whose needs are not being met through home care end up in emergency. They end up in one of the ALC beds in our hospitals. They are the ones waiting 118 days to get placed in a long-term-care home.

Home care is broken. Will you get rid of the competitive bidding process?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As far as I'm concerned, we've had this debate in the past. We've come to a landing on this, and we think we've struck the appropriate balance. Again, we're putting the patient at the centre of the system. We want to make sure they're delivering the best possible care. I'm proud to report that since 2003, 182,000 more clients are now receiving home care as a result of the system we have put in place.

I appreciate the advice offered by my honourable colleague, but I just don't think we enjoy the luxury of bringing an ideological perspective to these things. We've got to strike a balance between ensuring that we have the best-quality care available to our patients—when I say “patients,” these are mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, people who are shut-ins in many cases—and ensuring that we are also being accountable to taxpayers.

I'm confident that by putting the patient at the centre of this and ensuring that we follow the quality outputs very, very closely, we're in the right place.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. From bears to coyotes, some Ontario wildlife is so abundant that it's preying upon and damaging agriculture crops, livestock and poultry.

In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock farmers recognize that wildlife damage is an inherent risk, which they accept. It's when the damage rises to intolerable levels that they turn to their government for help.

Currently, farmers are eligible for limited compensation for their losses under the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act. However, they feel that there are some shortcomings with the act. The act only applies to a limited number of predators and livestock.

Could the minister please inform the House what, if any, steps are being taken to address these concerns, to update the act?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you very much for the question.

Certainly, I understand that wildlife can be a very serious concern to the affected producers. There has been a discussion paper on my ministry website that was available till October 1. We will now review the comments. Specifically, we wanted to hear—and I'm just going to name a couple of points—what our farmers had to say about species that should be included and also what would be adequate, what would be fair levels of compensation for predators.

One of the things that I think is a critical piece is, this legislation has not been addressed for 30 years and we recognize that it's long overdue. The Open for Business bill gave the opportunity to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: During question period, I said that the government's plan to bring in an eco tax on cars was on page 30 of the Waste to Worth report. I would like to correct that for the record. It is on page 30 of the PDF version on the minister's website, but on page 23 of the hard copy of the report.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is a point of order. The member can correct her own record.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me—this is the last day for this group of pages. Let's say thank you to them and wish them all the best.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's great when there is harmony in the House and everyone is working together. The Speaker much appreciates that.

Members, guests and audience, have a great Thanksgiving and make sure that when you're out shopping for your Thanksgiving dinner you buy local and buy Ontario. Support Ontario farmers. Happy Thanksgiving.

We are recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's my pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park Maureen Millar, the mother of page Christopher Millar, and his grandmother Marie Millar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want to introduce Russell Ormerod from the Pelham area, down in the Niagara region, where I live. He's here today to show his support for Bill 76, the Visual Fire Alarm System Act.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome to the west gallery Shawna Clouthier and Marianne McGee, plus some other people whose names haven't been provided to me yet. They are here for the introduction of a private member's bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome a former member who will be joining us today, Gary Malkowski, who represented York East in the 35th Parliament. Gary will be here momentarily.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: People affected by past public divestments are getting restless because of the McGuinty government's foot-dragging when it comes to the introduction of regulations to the Pension Benefits Amendment Act.

The bill was passed in May and now it's October, and honest and hard-working employees still can't merge their pension assets. With each passing day, countless people are at risk of losing the opportunity for pension fairness.

I want to read from an email I received from an employee of the county of Simcoe:

"While I enjoy my job, I'm looking forward to a change and am anxious to start making plans for retirement. Unfortunately, I can't do that as I have no idea when this will all be settled. It was not our fault that our responsibility was handed over to the municipality, and to have our pensions reduced was totally unfair...."

"As you can well imagine, the stress of waiting gets worse as each day goes by. Please keep working to have this resolved. I worry that many will retire before it is [settled] because they aren't even aware of the changes."

I expressed these same concerns to the Premier and Minister of Finance on several occasions, and I know that many others have also done so. None of us has received a response. So I ask again: When will the McGuinty government restore the full pension benefits that these workers have earned?

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members' statements? The member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. You finally achieved the ability to remember that. Thank you.

I'm pleased to rise today in the Legislature to recognize Mental Illness Awareness Week.

One in five people will experience a mental illness in their lifetime, and increasingly we are all aware of the need for all of us to be more aware and accepting of mental health issues.

In response to this need, Hamilton steelmaker ArcelorMittal Dofasco and its employees have announced a donation of \$1.5 million to St. Joseph's Healthcare's West 5th mental health campus. This incredible donation will be used by the hospital to build stronger and more comprehensive mental health services for nearly 2.5 million people in south-central Ontario and help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness through best practices in prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

I invite my colleagues and members from all sides of this House to join me in congratulating ArcelorMittal Dofasco and its employees for their wonderful donation. AMD gives credence to the thought that we are indeed all in this together, for good mental health has never been more important. Good mental health is absolutely essential to everyone's well-being, and it's a sign of a strong, healthy society.

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This weekend, Canadians will be celebrating Thanksgiving. It's a time to recognize and thank our farmers. It's also a time to remember those in need.

There are many Ontario families that simply can't afford to put food on the table. They rely on our food banks to help them. In 2009, over 375,000 Ontarians used food banks, an all-time high for the province.

I want to commend all the people and organizations who generously donate to Ontario's food banks. But sadly, over the last few years, there has been a significant drop in donations, due in part to the many processing plants that have been forced out of Ontario.

My colleague Bob Bailey has introduced a private member's bill that provides a simple solution to help those families and Ontario's farmers. Bill 78, a bill to fight hunger with local food, provides a tax credit for farmers who donate food to the food bank. This will help farmers pay for the harvesting and transportation of the food they are donating. I want to commend the member for Sarnia-Lambton for his great work on this bill.

A few weeks ago, this bill received unanimous and enthusiastic support on second reading. We have a responsibility to move forward quickly on this bill and help these families. I call on the McGuinty government to move the bill forward and give it third reading before Christmas. Don't leave this bill sitting in committee. Let's give these families, food banks and farmers something to celebrate.

I want to wish all members and all Ontarians a happy Thanksgiving.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST NORWAY CHURCH

Mr. Michael Prue: This past Sunday, October 3, I had the privilege to attend the church of St. John the Baptist Norway for the induction of their new Anglican priest, the Reverend Jeffrey Sangwine.

The church itself is a historic landmark in Beaches—East York. It was built in the old village of Norway—this was many, many years ago, before the first of many amalgamations—and it was built high on a hill overlooking the lake. But today it's found at the corner of Kingston Road and Woodbine.

The church was absolutely packed. There were parishioners, residents, friends and family. An incredible choir sang songs that were familiar to me and a great many that I had never heard before. The music and the trumpets were inspiring. The church people had processions to all corners over the hour-and-a-half ceremony. Vows were made, and I am positive they will be kept. There was a covenant of the people and of their new minister. It was a truly inspiring day.

At the conclusion of the day, everyone was invited for food and fellowship downstairs, and in the best Canadian tradition, it was Chinese food.

Best wishes to the parish and to Reverend Sangwine in his new ministry as they go forth together in service to our community and service to all mankind.

THE KNIGHTS TABLE

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise to congratulate the Knights Table Food Bank on winning the Tropicana and Breakfast Television Brighter Mornings contest this past summer.

This award is given to an organization that helps brighten the day by improving someone's life and impacting the community in a positive way. The Knights Table certainly deserves our recognition.

The Knights Table is also in the running for a \$100,000 prize in Pepsi's Refresh contest. I encourage all my constituents to support the Knights Table by voting at www.refresheverything.ca/knightstable.

1310

It's important to show the impact the Knights Table has made in alleviating poverty in Peel. The Knights Table is the only multi-food location within the region of Peel that offers programs and services 365 days of the year without user fees to those individuals and families impacted by hunger, poverty and homelessness.

The Knights Table has played an integral role for the past 20 years in working to alleviate hunger and ensuring that no one goes hungry in Peel.

I would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers for their hard work and dedication. Your commitment to helping the less fortunate is truly inspiring.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today, as we wrap up Fire Prevention Week.

I had an opportunity last Saturday to talk to Chief Ralph Dominelli from the Orillia fire department. That was following the court case that was held last Friday, October 1, on the Muskoka Heights Retirement Residence—which resulted in the deaths of four seniors.

Both Ralph Dominelli, chief of the City of Orillia Fire Department, and Tim Beckett, president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, have some important advice for the government and this Legislature. I'll read a quote from Ralph Dominelli's press release. It says, "This tragic case highlights the need for changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act that would require automatic sprinklers in care occupancies. Since 1980, 44 deaths and countless injuries have occurred in care occupancies. In Ontario, there have been four serious fires in care occupancies since 2008—Huntsville, Niagara Falls, Orillia and Owen Sound. Three separate coroner's inquests in 1980, 1995 and 1997 have all recommended the full retroactive installation of automatic sprinklers in all existing care occupancies."

Chief Beckett goes on to make similar comments in his release on behalf of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs.

As we talk about Fire Prevention Week, we have to listen to our fire chiefs across this province. I think in a lot of cases we do a fairly good job—but in this case I think it's important that we may save lives by listening to some of these fire prevention officers.

MAURICE FOSTER

Mr. Michael A. Brown: On Saturday, October 2, Dr. Maurice Brydon Foster passed away in Ottawa after a valiant three-year struggle with pulmonary fibrosis.

Maurice was a 1937 graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College. He practised in Desbarats from 1959 until his election to the House of Commons in 1968, to represent the constituency of Algoma, previously represented by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Honourable Lester B. Pearson.

For the next 25 years, Maurice, in his calm, tenacious, determined way, worked on behalf of the people of Algoma. He successfully contested six elections through all political winds. He knew how to sail with the wind, and he knew how to tack when it wasn't at his back.

He was the consummate constituency man. In other words, Maurice was a friend, always interested, always energetic and always effective. Upon leaving elected politics, he worked in Prime Minister Chrétien's office.

Yesterday in Ottawa, I had the privilege, along with several hundred people, including Mr. Chrétien, senators, members of Parliament both past and present, and friends, to share with his wife, Janet, their children, Peter, Andy, Peggy and James, 14 grandchildren, brother Garry, brother-in-law Bud and many nieces and nephews, a wonderful memorial and a celebration of Dr. Foster's life. I understand there will be a further memorial this summer in Desbarats.

The people of Canada and the people of Algoma, and I, have lost a friend. Our thoughts to Jan and the family.

OKTOBERFEST

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I rise in the House today with a good-news item, to talk about a cultural event that has become a huge success in Ontario, across Canada and North America. It takes place each year in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. Yes, it's that time of year again: Oktoberfest. It's here again.

Interjections.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Without the dirndl, I might add. Oktoberfest is here. Dirndl or no dirndl, it's here.

So I invite all of you to attend this wonderful event—

Interjection.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Absolutely—in Waterloo region, to join us for this cultural event. It starts tomorrow, October 8, and it concludes the following Saturday, on the 16th.

Since 1969, Kitchener–Waterloo Oktoberfest has developed Bavarian traditions and festivals. Thousands of visitors create a celebration in our festhallen, and there are 40 family and cultural events that everyone can come and join and be part of. The celebration and the spirit of *gemütlichkeit* to the festival gives the local economy a huge boost, with over \$1.5 million that is being raised for 70 charities and not-for-profit organizations throughout Waterloo region.

Please come and have a great time at Oktoberfest. It's a wonderful experience in Kitchener–Waterloo and Kitchener–Conestoga, in my riding—for good cheer, friendly staff wearing German tracht serving sausages, schnitzels, beer and beer nuts. So, wunderbar, and come and join us in Oktoberfest.

MEHREGAN

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am pleased to rise in this House today on the occasion of Mehregan. The Zoroastrian holy book divides the year into two equal seasons, the first season being summer and the second being winter. The coming of the two seasons would be celebrated through Nowruz and Mehregan. Long ago, Mehregan was celebrated by Iranians with the same magnificence and pageantry as Nowruz. It has been the second most elaborate celebration after Nowruz. Like Nowruz, Mehregan was not celebrated by all Iranians and is mainly regarded as a Zoroastrian festival. In recent decades, there has been a revival of this joyful and merry occasion.

Mehregan is celebrated on the 16th of the seventh month, Mehr, of the Iranian calendar, or on October 8th on the international calendar. As some members might have noted, Mehregan is very similar to Thanksgiving, the festival of harvest. During Mehregan, a feast would be celebrated for six days, starting on the 16th, called Mehr Ruz, and ending on the 21st, known as Raam Ruz. During these days, after the farmers had taken their

harvest, they would relax and pray and thank God for the harvest.

I'd like to wish a happy Mehregan to my fellow Iranian Canadians and to members of the Zoroastrian community of Ontario, and a very happy Thanksgiving for all Ontarians.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Kormos assumes ballot item 48 and Madame Gélinas assumes ballot item 74.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES ENFANTS

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of certain children's mental health services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / *Projet de loi 117, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée afin de transférer l'administration de certains services de santé mentale pour les enfants au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: Before I begin my short statement, I'm delighted to inform the House that this bill is being co-sponsored by myself, by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, and by the member from Nickel Belt, Madame Gélinas, and I hope all members will support it.

The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act to transfer the administration of programs under part IV of the Child and Family Services Act from the Minister of Children and Youth Services to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The programs affected relate to the treatment of children with mental health disorders in which continuous restrictions are imposed on the liberty of children.

This is in line with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions' recommendation number 1.

1320

PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS
AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE
DE SENSIBILISATION À LA PERTE
D'UNE GROSSESE OU D'UN BÉBÉ

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to proclaim Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day / Projet de loi 118, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation à la perte d'une grossesse ou d'un bébé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill proclaims October 15 in each year as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Day.

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION
AMENDMENT ACT

(PUBLIC ENTITIES), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ENREGISTREMENT
DES LOBBYISTES (ENTITÉS PUBLIQUES)

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 to prohibit consultant lobbyists from lobbying on behalf of public entities / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes pour interdire aux lobbyistes-conseils d'exercer des pressions pour le compte d'entités publiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The bill amends the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, to prohibit consultant-lobbyists from lobbying on behalf of public entities. The bill also changes the title of the act to the Lobbyists Registration and Restrictions Act, 1998.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I seek unanimous consent that during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, in the event that Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall

immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Paul Miller: I present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with this and will affix my name.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed here by a great number of people in the township of East Zorra-Tavistock in the great riding of Oxford county, and it is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the ... province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

“Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

“Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario.”

I want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this petition to me, and I will sign it.

RECYCLING

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials (as illustrated in their letter, attached). This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do. We implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give this proposed initiative of a household red box recycling program your approval into law;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We, the undersigned, would like to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and implore the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass into law such a program, as described in the attached letter outlining the red box recycling initiative, as presented.”

I agree with the petitioners, so I put my signature on it.

1330

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: Given the number of petitions that have been submitted on this, I do trust that the minister is listening. A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a similar petition from the good folks in my riding in the village of Utopia, a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition, and this one is certified by the Clerk, pursuant to the standing orders. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature to it and hand it off to page Thomas.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

VISUAL FIRE ALARM SYSTEM ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SYSTÈMES D'ALARME-INCENDIE À AFFICHAGE VISUEL

Mr. Arthurs moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act respecting visual fire alarm systems in public buildings / Projet de loi 76, Loi sur les systèmes d'alarme-incendie à affichage visuel dans les édifices publics.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you so much for this opportunity in these 12 minutes and for the debate that we have the opportunity to have here today.

Three times—third time lucky, I hope—in the past number of weeks, during private members' debate, we have had the opportunity to hear, from all sides of the House, private members' bills that had been introduced more than once, that have been up for debate. I think we've heard of strong interest in seeing some of those bills move forward into the committee stage in debate and ultimately back in this place, hopefully for adoption. I am hoping that following today's debate, subject to the pleasure of the Legislature, if this bill meets with the approval of those here on second reading and is referred to committee at this point, after a third time around it might well receive the support of committee and be reintroduced in this place for third reading, and with any additional luck, ultimate adoption.

As I say, this is the third time I've had the opportunity to introduce, if not the bill in exactly the same words—the first time out, it was a little bit different. It was scoped for the second time and is effectively being reintroduced on a third time to reflect exactly what we had before us on second reading. It's an act to provide for visual fire alarm systems in public buildings, those public buildings being new provincial and municipal buildings.

We have the opportunity today, as well, to have a number of guests in the Legislature, and I hope that we will take the opportunity, in the appropriate fashion—I know that behind me, there is a sign language interpreter working with some of our constituents so that they can participate in hearing what is happening here today in this debate. Please join me in welcoming them to the Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Earlier, during introductions, Gary Malkowski was recognized, and I'd like to just

reinforce that. As a former member of this place and a member of the NDP government of the day, from 1990 to 1995, he made a valuable contribution and obviously continues to make a valuable contribution in the community on his advocacy for those who have hearing disabilities.

I was looking through my notes and Hansard from the last time I introduced this bill, and, quite frankly, there's not much different that I would like to say. You were actually in the chair that day, Speaker, when I introduced it at that point in time. The bill is only one page. It's pretty straightforward. It speaks to a fairly simplistic need in the community, one that could be adopted as it sits, or, if the government so chose, it could pick up the bill, modify it, regulate it and bring it forward in a fashion that would even better meet the needs. But first we have to get through second reading before we need to concern ourselves with that.

The bill, in the one page, states, "All new municipal and public buildings shall be equipped with a visual fire alarm system." Under subsection (1), it applies to "a provincial or municipal public building for which a building permit application is made on or after the first anniversary of the day this section comes into force." There's no requirement to retrofit buildings, there will be no requirement to deal with a building that might happen to be proposed or seeks a permit today. It provides a window of opportunity a full year out after this bill would come into force, before a municipality or a public, provincial building would need to install a visual fire alarm.

1340

It provides some provisions as to the nature of those visual fire alarm systems, including a feature that electronically displays messages in respect to the fire alarm, including one or all of the following messages:

"1. The fact that the fire alarm has been activated.

"2. Information on the appropriate response, including whether to evacuate....

"3. Information on the nearest exit."

The act, obviously, would bind the crown.

There are a number of considerations for me in bringing forward this bill, and in the need in our community. I want to speak to just a couple of those. I want to speak to the objective of this place and the objective of the government of the day to make Ontario a more accessible province. Thus, legislation is in place to provide for full accessibility. Full accessibility should also provide for the security and independence of all individuals in the province. Those with hearing loss should not be left out of that opportunity.

In addition to the pure safety factors that come with visual fire alarms in a public building, there is the opportunity for those with a hearing loss to have the dignity of being able to act of their own accord. It wouldn't be fine for someone to say, "Well, you really don't need those in a public building in a public space. There's lots of people around. Someone will tell them there's a fire alarm and show them where the nearest exit is." That doesn't

support the individual freedoms and dignity that come with acting of your own accord. I think it's important not only for the safety features, not only to build upon what we want to have in an accessible Ontario—and this bill does provide an opportunity for us to put these into public spaces, where people gather; to highlight and profile that we are acting in the context of making Ontario as accessible a province as possible. This is one small opportunity for us to do that, quite frankly at very, very modest cost, either to the provincial government or to municipalities, on new structures that they're putting into place.

I think we all in this place have either acquaintances, colleagues or family members who have disabilities. In the last time I spoke to this bill, I made a reference to my own family. One of my children has a rather significant hearing loss. In the absence of his hearing aid, he is, for all practical purposes, dysfunctional when it comes to the capacity to hear and act accordingly.

I told a story last time I introduced this bill; I'm going to tell the story again because I think it's worth repeating. A few years ago, my wife and I and my son were at our cottage. In the middle of the night, we had an awful storm. It was one of those microbursts. Trees were falling in front of the property, windows were being broken by branches coming through. I must say, both my wife and I were rather concerned about whether the cottage would still be standing as the wind howled through the broken windows. My son was in a back bedroom away from the lakefront, away from the wind. My wife said, "Should we wake him up?" And I said, "No, there's no need to wake him because he can't hear what's going on anyway." There was no sense in three of us being in a panic; two of us was enough. The point being that first, he was unable to function in that emergency situation in an effective way. Not that visual fire alarms would have helped him in that particular instance, but he was unable to function in an emergency situation because he was unable to know what was happening. Secondly, he didn't have the opportunity to make those decisions.

Obviously, over the years, I have become acutely aware of some of the disadvantages that come with hearing loss. I think of it as a hidden disability because it's one you don't see; it's not one that you can see. A mobility issue is more identifiable. For me, it's important to raise the awareness for those with hearing loss (1) for their protection and (2) because of the dignity and responsibility that they want to achieve on their own.

I had a chance, coming in here, to say we have a number of guests who are here because they are interested in this matter. They have followed this matter each time I have brought the bill forward. They have taken the opportunity to do press releases. They have taken the opportunity to engage other organizations.

Just this week, the Canadian Hearing Society put out a press release in regard to this matter and in regard to Fire Prevention Week, which is currently under way. In their press release they have taken the time to speak to this:

"Wayne Arthurs will reintroduce, for the third time, the private member's bill on visual fire alarm systems,

Bill 76.... His earlier bills—148 and 59—received second reading and have been endorsed by all political parties."

It's nice to have the communities who have an interest take an interest in the bills that we present in this place and be champions for them. We can similarly, I think, be champions for them. We have that opportunity.

As I was coming in this afternoon, I was introduced to a gentleman, and he provided me with a letter addressed, "To whom it may concern"—a broader letter, so it's more publicly open. The gentleman's name is Russell Ormerod, and I want to read it to you. I think the member from Welland is familiar with him.

Russell says, "I am deaf myself. I am a technician and I specialize in life safety and property protection, which consists of fire alarm systems, security systems and environmental systems, to name a few.

"I am here today to show my support for the reintroduction of the Visual Fire Alarm System Act, 2010, under Bill 76 that MPP Wayne Arthurs is proposing in the Legislature today.

"My being present in the Legislature today signifies my strong support that deaf and hard-of-hearing people need to have access to visual means for notifying them of a fire alarm or a break-in, which they would not otherwise have easy access to due to the extraordinary cost and the work involved in hard-wiring the systems."

His letter goes on. I won't read it all, but I think it's indicative of the fact that those in the community with hearing loss are taking the personal time to be here, to write, to engage us in what their needs are, and I think we have the opportunity to pick up that challenge, not only here as legislators today but ideally, following today, if this receives endorsement on second reading, the opportunity to see if we can get this bill through committee, through second reading and back here for endorsement.

The need is self-evident. The bill is not speaking to a broad range of opportunity from the context of the assistive devices program, which our friends here would like to see enhanced. It's not speaking to sprinkler systems, which is a different issue. The focus here is quite simply the provision of visual fire alarms in new provincial and municipal buildings, and my objective is to keep the focus as clear as possible on that provision, not to enter into the broader range of debate that's valuable and probably quite necessary, but ideally to keep the focus and achieve one aspect, one goal: to have visual fire alarms in municipal and provincial new buildings as a starting point for other activities to support those who are hard of hearing or deaf in our community.

I would ask for the support of this Legislature at the end of this hour debate on second reading of Bill 76.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to join the debate today on Bill 76. We will definitely be supporting this legislation, the Visual Fire Alarm System Act. The bill, if passed, would require that all new provincial and municipal public buildings be equipped with visual fire

alarm systems so that the deaf and hearing-impaired are alerted when fire alarms are activated.

To begin with, I certainly don't think this bill is unreasonable in any way, particularly when it applies to new public municipal and provincial buildings. I think that's why we as legislators are in this particular building: we're supposed to be trying to make improvements for people all the time. I think of legislation like my colleague from Oxford's on the equipment he would like to see installed in homes for carbon monoxide, because it's something that may save lives.

It's interesting that the member would bring this bill forward at the very end of Fire Prevention Week. We see over and over again examples of why we continue to make improvements.

1350

I had a statement a little bit earlier in the House on Fire Prevention Week, and I wanted to follow up a little bit more on it.

In my riding, a retirement home burned two years ago this coming January. It was an older retirement home and there was no sprinkler system.

Over and over again, after numerous deaths in retirement homes, the fire chiefs of not only the city of Orillia—Ralph Dominelli—but the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, have called on the province of Ontario to take a more active approach and to require sprinklers.

It's all in the same category, because we're here to try to save lives and do what's right for our constituents.

In a lot of cases, I think the government tends to take these private members' bills for granted. I understand that this is the third time this thing has been through, much the same as the cellphone bill that Mr. O'Toole introduced four or five times. Finally, after a while, the government listened and introduced a cellphone bill, and now we have hands-free legislation with our phones in the province of Ontario. That's probably what's going to happen here. Eventually, someone will listen to this bill and the government will take a proactive approach. They won't give credit to Mr. Arthurs, but the minister will bring in his own bill and will take credit for it, pretending that he actually cares about visual fire alarm systems.

It's kind of sad that we continue to do this in private members' hour. Over and over again, good legislation is brought in, very positive legislation for the citizens of our province, and the government tends to neglect it. I think this would be very positive legislation for our citizens, and I'm hoping that we can convince the ministry and all members of this House to take it to committee, take it to the next step. It doesn't have to be in some kind of a platform document; this could be passed before the next election. Everybody would leave here in a positive manner, particularly all the people who are in the Legislature today supporting you, Mr. Arthurs, in your attempt to see Bill 76 pass for the third time.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the bill. The visual fire alarm must include more features than a normal fire alarm. The features would include a strobe beacon or electronic display messages that indicate that the alarm

has been activated, where the nearest exit is and whether evacuation is necessary. Visual fire alarms can determine the difference between life and death for Ontarians who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

In my riding each year, I hold pre-budget consultations with my constituents, and each and every year, at both my Orillia pre-budget consultation and my Midland pre-budget consultation, I get the hearing groups coming to see me. Each and every year, they ask for this. They think that it's important legislation. They come well prepared, probably with the same documentation they have provided to you, saying, "This is something we need in Ontario, something that will save lives, and we'd ask you, as our local MPP, to support this if it comes up in the House." For that reason alone—besides the fact that I've supported it in the past—as a critic for community safety and correctional services, I have an obligation to recommend to my caucus members that this be supported and that we move forward in a very proactive manner with this.

As I said, when you're looking at the huge expense of new provincial and municipal buildings to begin with, I don't think this is going to add a great deal of cost when you're already doing the pre-wiring and the pre-battery systems that we have for our current fire alarms. I think it's important that we take the little bit of extra money it will cost for some of the equipment and put it in place. We've done it in this building. There's no better example than this building here. When the bells are called here, we see the flashing lights and we also hear the bells in the hallways. We did it because of a former colleague in the Legislature who felt that this was right for his presence in this facility.

As we move through this debate this afternoon, I'm thinking that all members of the House will be supporting this, but we really have to zero in on the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Let those ministries work together, make sure that they can bring support for Mr. Arthurs's Bill 76 and get it into committee. Like I said earlier, there are a number of those types of bills we've seen here in this Legislature, but, above all, even if it's not acceptable to them, let's make it a government bill. Let's make it part of an omnibus bill or just a bill on its own, but let's get this bill passed and then we can make sure that the citizens who are in the Legislature here today are pleased with it and they can feel that their legislators here at Queen's Park are really acting in a proactive way.

In closing, I wanted to welcome everyone here today—all the folks in the Legislature—who is supporting this legislation. I want to say, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus, that we will be supporting this legislation and encouraging government members and the government itself to move forward and get this bill through the committee and passed once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It indeed is a pleasure for me to get a few remarks on the record today in support of my good friend the member from Pickering–Scarborough East and Bill 76.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize Saverio Montemarano, who is in the members' west gallery today. He's been very involved with Melody Homes in the great riding of Peterborough. We really appreciate his investment in our community. Mr. Montemarano, it's good to have you here.

Bill 76 is an important piece of legislation. I have chatted with the regional manager of the Peterborough Hearing Society, Ms. Maggie Doherty-Gilbert, and she is certainly very supportive of this. The opportunity to enshrine this kind of technology in new provincial and municipal buildings a year after a building permit has been issued for those particular projects is exceedingly important. I know that the Peterborough Council for Persons with Disabilities has been in Peterborough for some 30 years and is also very supportive of this.

By enshrining this legislation, it really raises the bar in the province of Ontario to make sure that we have this type of technology in new municipal and provincial buildings. Indeed, it sends quite a signal to buildings beyond both the municipal and the provincial sectors to put this kind of technology in place.

We are, over the last several decades, starting with the work of one of Ontario's most successful Premiers, Mr. Davis, when he became Premier in 1971, continuing to build an inclusive society in the province of Ontario by bringing in various pieces of legislation to make sure that we include all our residents in this great province.

A former member, Mr. Malkowski, who served so ably here in the early 1990s, of course, has been a strong advocate to push us to make sure that we employ the kind of technology that provides a warning signal for those who might find themselves in a very stressful situation.

I think also, to make changes—the Canadian Hearing Society—to Ontario's building code—and there are, of course, other players that work with us in the private sector that are certainly making moves in this area. That's why private member's Bill 76, by raising the standard, is so important to all of us here.

Having never experienced myself, but certainly chatting with people who have found themselves in a very difficult situation in a house fire—and these were people who did not have any disabilities of any nature—of course it truly is a very frightening experience. If you look at this from the perspective of somebody who has a disability, you just kind of ratchet up the challenges that are faced by those individuals.

1400

I think it's important in many, many of the groups. I know that the Canadian Hearing Society has been pressing for this particular piece of legislation for many years. We know that the current law in Ontario does not address who is responsible for the cost or installation of visual fire alarms and/or notification systems within individual apartment units, new condominium units or

new homes. Further, landlords are not required to provide visual fire alarms for their culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing residents, nor are home builders required to install such devices into new homes or condominium units for purchase by culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing buyers.

As I said, I think this is important because it does raise the bar. It sends a very powerful signal that we need to make sure—this technology may be available and installed beyond what this bill requires, but, certainly, our municipal buildings and our provincial buildings are constructed—they're made accessible, and they are often community hubs and the kinds of buildings that people need to reach, to use, on an everyday basis.

With those words, I'm certainly prepared to support this legislation. I compliment my colleague from Pickering–Scarborough East for bringing this forward at this particular time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to join the debate on Bill 76, the Visual Fire Alarm System Act, 2010, which has been introduced by Mr. Wayne Arthurs from Pickering–Scarborough East.

I can tell you that I will be supporting this bill. I think my colleague has already indicated that he will be as well. We do think it is a good bill. It has been introduced before; I believe this is the third time. We believe there is merit in moving this bill forward. We would hope, if it is supported today by the members in this Legislature, that it would have the opportunity to go to committee, where we could take a look at how we could make what is a good bill even better and also address, obviously, some of the issues and challenges that need to be given serious consideration.

One of the concerns, probably, for those who have to put in the system, will be the cost. However, if you take a look at this bill, it is only dealing with new provincial and municipal public buildings, and it's asking that they be equipped with a visual fire alarm system so that deaf and hearing-impaired people are alerted to fire alarms.

I've certainly heard from people in my community, and they believe that this bill is necessary. It will certainly support them and help them to be much more independent.

This visual fire alarm system would include a strobe beacon or a similar feature. It could include additional features such as an electronic display message that would indicate that the fire alarm has been activated; where you would go, to the nearest exit; and whether or not there was a need to evacuate.

I think we can appreciate that this bill is important. This bill should be supported today, and it should go to committee, where we'd have an opportunity to take a look at all of the issues that need to be given some further consideration.

Certainly, we have smoke detectors in our homes today. If we take a look at this particular bill—we are also hearing that the Canadian Hearing Society has

indicated that they feel that the installation of visual fire alarms and visual notification systems should also be eligible for some degree of financial support. The Canadian Hearing Society also feels that all builders and landlords should be required to install visual fire alarms for individual buyers or in tenant units at no cost. They also believe that builders and landlords should be able to recoup the additional expense from the government.

In a province where we do try to do everything we can in order to improve access and to improve services for those who do have disabilities, it's important that we seriously consider this bill that is before us. So I am going to be very pleased to support the bill.

I think we need to also keep in mind that safety is important. In our province, there are certainly many people who, unfortunately, die each year from fire. There are between 100 and 200. We do have a responsibility, particularly now in our seniors' homes where we have many people living over the age of 65, and we know that the numbers are going to double. We need to do everything we can for those people with impaired hearing to keep them safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my privilege to stand and say a few words about this bill. It's also my privilege today to address people who are here with Gary Malkowski, my friend, my colleague and a man who has done much for the deaf community and did much when he was an MPP in this House.

This morning I stood and I asked a question in question period. I asked the question of the Minister of Community Safety. I did it knowing full well that this debate would take place this afternoon. I did it to ask the Minister of Community Safety exactly what the government's plan and commitment were for fire safety, for fire safety regulations and for bills like this that have come forward and what the government was going to do with them.

I have to say that I was not very happy with the answer. The answer was that the government is doing a lot of things, but I'm not sure that the government is doing a lot of things. I cited three, I think, perfect examples.

I'm proud to see that the three people who are trying to do something about fire safety are all here today. The first person who attempted to do something in what I think was a remarkable bill, which has never seen the light of day, is the member from Brampton-Springdale, now a minister. She came to this House on three or four occasions to put forward a bill that would mandate sprinklers in all new residential properties. It was a very good idea. Fire chiefs from across the province came here to talk about how fast fires can spread. They showed us simulations of flashpoints, when something goes up in fire—a couch goes up in flames—how fast it can spread and how quickly it is put out with a sprinkler system. That bill came forward three or four times and died on the order paper. It was an excellent bill; nothing ever happened with it.

I put in a motion, and it has been debated now four times in this Legislature, which would outlaw or make illegal wooden fire escapes. People, when I tell them that I'm trying to put forward a bill so that Ontario no longer has wooden fire escapes, stare at me in disbelief that this province would allow this practice to continue. They don't understand that there are wooden fire escapes throughout this entire province. The bill has been put forward four times. Four times it has passed this Legislature at second reading. Twice it has made it all the way through the committee process. It seems to me very logical. It has been supported by all members of the House.

Now we have the bill standing in the name of the member from Scarborough-Pickering East, which says that we should have visual fire alarms for the deaf, the deafened and the hard of hearing. This is the third time that he is bringing this bill forward.

1410

None of these bills has been enacted by the government opposite me. These bills have been proposed for the last seven years—time after time after time. I believe, in total, the three bills have been before us 11 times. They have been passed unanimously, each of those bills, on every single occasion. They have been sent to committee on each and every occasion. I am absolutely confident that when this vote is taken it will be sent to committee for the third time. We all want it to go there. We'll all vote for it to go there—government members and opposition members.

Here is the problem: It is the government and the government House leader alone who can determine which bills go any further than today. They are the only one, the only person, the only cabinet member; they have to make the determination of which bills will survive and which ones will not.

I and my caucus have no hope of influencing this. We do not sit in the government caucus. We are not there to argue that the bills be allowed to proceed, so I have to ask my friends opposite to assist the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. Assist him in getting this through.

It is not enough to send it to committee if the committee is never allowed to hear it. It is not enough to send it to committee even if the committee is allowed to hear it and not have it called for third reading. That's what happens.

We know other things can happen. I witnessed it this very day, this very afternoon, when the minister without portfolio and the chair of cabinet stood in his place and asked that the bill that we're going to argue right after this one go to third reading today and that it be done without debate. He had unanimous consent to do it. It's going to happen. That bill this afternoon, the one following this, in all likelihood is going to be debated, it's going to be passed, it's going to be ordered for third reading and it's going to be law by the time we walk out of this room. That can happen.

But why can't it happen for this fire bill? Why can't it happen for the bill from the member from Brampton—

Springdale or the bill that I put forward? It's because the government doesn't want to do it. The government is dragging its feet, kicking and screaming for seven years saying, "This is not our priority."

In those seven years, what has happened? People have died, people who could have been saved. Homes that could have been saved have burned. People have died inside those homes.

I believe that the bill that's being put forward today is essential. People in Ontario who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing absolutely deserve the same equality as people who are not. They deserve the right to have the same equality in law and the same opportunity in law. All that is required is that, instead of having a sound system, they have a visual system. That is all the change that is being asked for here.

Can we accommodate it as a province? Absolutely. Will it cost a few dollars? More than likely. Is it necessary to do it? Yes, it is. It's necessary to do it to save lives. But more importantly to me, it's more important to do it so that all Ontarians have equality of opportunity and equality of safety.

This past year, there was a tragic fire in East York. The house burned down. My friend Maureen Lindsay was the sole occupant of the house, and she died. She died because the fire alarm that was in her house had the battery put in backwards. It didn't go off. She didn't hear it.

We know that this was a technical problem. I guess she or whoever installed it put it in backwards and it didn't work. But that told me a thousand things about the debate today. She couldn't hear it, so she died. The people who are here watching this will never hear it, even if it's put in the right way. Of what value is this audio alarm to them if it cannot be heard? The battery might as well be put in backwards. It might as well be, because it is absolutely of no value. If it cannot be heard, it doesn't work.

I am asking that people vote for this. I'm asking that all members vote for it, but I'm especially asking that the members opposite push this in their caucus and make sure that this goes to committee and that it is lifted from committee and comes back for third reading.

I am asking that the members of the Liberal caucus argue that the money is secondary to the issue. Will it cost money? Yes, it will. It costs more to put in a visual alarm than it costs to put in an audio alarm. You can go to Canadian Tire, Home Depot, Home Hardware or a thousand stores across this province and buy those alarms for about \$15. To put in a visual alarm costs many hundreds of dollars, because they have to be wired; they're strobe lights and there are a whole bunch of things that have to happen. Yes, it does cost more money, but in order to be fair and honest to deaf Canadians, we need to give them the same opportunity. The tool is slightly different; it's slightly more expensive, but it can work.

I'm asking as well that all members look at the purpose and the intent of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It was passed unanimously in this House

a number of years ago. It has a 25-year time frame, which in my view is too long, but that's what was passed. But the spirit and intent was that, at the end of the period, everyone with a disability in this province will have equality of opportunity, everyone in this province will have equality of service and everyone in this province will have equality to do the things that are necessary to be a full and complete citizen. One of those things is to feel free and safe in your own home, in your own municipal structures, in your own buildings and public buildings, so that if something happens you have the same knowledge and the same ability to protect yourself and your family as anyone else. The deaths continue. I cited one earlier today, a tragic case in St. Catharines. Had the bill passed before, that woman might still be alive.

Please do the right thing today, as I'm sure you will. Pass this bill, but please, Liberal members opposite, do something to help this bill in committee and in your caucus so that it goes to committee and it is the law before another person dies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on private members' business Bill 76, An Act respecting visual fire alarm systems in public buildings. This bill will require all new provincial and municipal public buildings be equipped with a visual fire alarm system.

I would like to thank my colleague the member from Pickering-Scarborough East for being so passionate and persistent about this important issue and bringing this bill to us for the third time. Let's hope that the third time is a charm and that this bill finally makes it into law.

As I was preparing my notes, it hit me that I know at least 10 people who have some type of impairment of hearing. Really, if you think about it, for all the other things that we do for people with disabilities, this bill is really important and an important first step that we should pursue vigorously. I will be supporting this bill, especially as it deals with trying to implement measures to keep people in Ontario safer.

1420

The installation of smoke alarms in buildings is a legal requirement today. However, they do not provide everyone with the same level of awareness as they should. By definition, a smoke alarm must sound an audible alarm to alert individuals of possible dangers. But for those with a hearing impairment, it will make no difference to them. Unfortunately, an audible alarm will not alert these people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing; therefore, their safety is at risk in our province.

I believe that this bill would begin the process to put culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing individuals on the same playing field during an emergency situation. I'm hoping also that as time passes and buildings are replaced in our province, we will achieve what I would consider full equity.

When this bill was debated in 2009, there were questions asked: why the bill didn't include existing public

buildings. The member from Pickering–Scarborough East responded that we have to be practical about how much we can accomplish. Although he would have liked to have accomplished a lot more with the bill, he was being realistic about what we can practicably achieve in today's environment.

I too would like this bill to accomplish more, such as protecting homes and including existing buildings, but I have to agree with my colleague across the way that that would be the goal for all of us in the long term. At least this is a step in the right direction. It is a first step, a baby step, but I wish him luck. I hope, with the passionate debate that is going on in the chamber today, that we will have this passed into law eventually.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly my pleasure to add my voice to all those who have spoken in support of Bill 76. I certainly congratulate the member for Pickering–Scarborough East on this initiative, and we hope it's certainly third time lucky.

I think it's worth acknowledging the size of the problem we're dealing with. Almost 25% of adult Canadians report having some hearing loss, even though 10% say that it interferes with their daily activities, but 10% is really a very large number. As has been alluded to, we are an aging population. By 2030, Canadians 65 years and older will represent 25% of the total population, nearly double the current 13%, and certainly we know that hearing loss prevalence rises with age; in fact, reports indicate that more than 80% of patients over 85 have a hearing loss. So this is a problem that affects many in our society, and it needs to be addressed.

It has also been brought to my attention by the Canadian hearing foundation that there's increasing evidence now that noise-induced hearing loss through the use of iPods cranked up at full volume is affecting the hearing of our youth. In fact, I've considered introducing a private member's bill in relation to limiting somehow the noise that people are exposed to, which will exacerbate this particular problem. So I think it's very important that we do have the visual signals as well.

I've been coming to the building—in my former position as medical officer of health, I used to visit very often. Over the last 20 years, I was here many, many times, and of course I heard the bells ringing, and then I saw lights flashing. I assumed it was because MPPs were such busy people, they were so distracted, that they might not notice the bells and they needed the lights flashing. It was only when I became an elected member that I heard of the influence that Gary Malkowski, former MPP and now with the Canadian Hearing Society, had on this place when he, with all reasonableness, pointed out the issue of those with disabilities and that those people who could not hear the bells needed a visual signal as well to remind them to come to debate. The work that he has done in terms of disabilities is something that we need to move forward.

This bill is a good step forward. It is extremely reasonable in the scope that our colleague from Pickering–

Scarborough East has put to it, that it be in new provincial and municipal buildings. It's a very reasonable approach and one that hopefully will save lives and do what what we need to do for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Pickering–Scarborough East, Mr. Arthurs, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to first, if I can, thank the members from Simcoe North, Peterborough, Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York, Scarborough–Rouge River and Oak Ridges–Markham for taking the time to participate in the debate and for their expressions of support for the bill.

I want to take just half a second—there's only a minute and 40 seconds—to introduce someone who didn't get introduced a little bit earlier—I didn't happen to see him—a member of the Oshawa city council, Tito-Dante Marimpietri. Tito, welcome. In addition to being here to see what we're doing, he may be here for another private member's bill this afternoon, if I'm not mistaken.

I want to speak, in the minute or so that's left, about three things, quickly. We need to build a foundation in some fashion. This can be part of that foundation on which we can put other building blocks at a later date. Providing for visual fire alarms in public, provincial and municipal new buildings can be a strong part of that foundation. It will show the leadership that we are obligated to provide as provincial elected officials, and similarly provide the opportunity for our municipal elected officials, like Tito, to be able to show that type of leadership in the context of making sure Ontario is accessible.

In my final comments, this really, for me, is about three things. First, it's certainly about the safety that comes with visual fire alarms for those with hearing disabilities; second, it recognizes a need for those in our community with disabilities to be independent and to make independent decisions; and thirdly, it shows that we have a respect for them and the dignity that they should have in making those decisions.

I'm anxious for when we get to the vote later today. I'm hopeful that all members of this place will support this bill. Maybe the third time will be a charm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Arthurs's ballot item has now expired. For people in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on this item in about 100 minutes.

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

Mr. Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 103, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine italien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's always an honour and a privilege to rise and address the House, especially leading the debate on Bill 103. I want to first of all welcome the members of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Toronto District, to the House today. We have worked with the congress to propose to the Ontario government the implementation of an Italian Heritage Month.

I'm delighted to join with my colleagues in the House to sponsor this bill, and I am truly pleased that the government will support third reading passage of the bill today, allowing our province to declare June Italian Heritage Month in Ontario.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Stop the clock so that Mr. Sergio will have his full time.

I just want to remind the people in the galleries that we do welcome you to Queen's Park today and we're very happy that you're here, but we do have a very strict rule that you can observe the debate but not participate in it. That includes clapping. My apologies.

Mr. Sergio.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I would like to acknowledge and thank the co-sponsors of the bill, the member from Thornhill, Mr. Peter Shurman, and one of the longest-serving members in the House, the honourable Mr. Rosario Marchese from Trinity-Spadina. Thank you very much for co-sponsoring the bill.

"I'm very pleased to express my support for Bill 103," says my colleague Laura Albanese. It's nice to see you with us today and we wish you well. It's good to be here.

1430

I think it is fitting that June be proclaimed Italian Heritage Month as Italy celebrates its national day on June 2. Italian Canadians have contributed greatly over the last century to the fabric of this country and this province. Their capacity to grow and integrate well in Canadian society reflects their commitment to family values, to looking after themselves and caring for others. Their accomplishments are a testament to the importance of a strong work ethic. Their creative, can-do approach to life has served them well. This bill represents a great milestone in the immigrant journey of the Italian Canadian experience. Thank you for being here.

Also, I would like to acknowledge members from the Italian community, among them the president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Toronto District, Mr. Mike Tibollo; our consul general, Mr. Bardini; I know our ambassador is on the way and should be here any time; and I have my wife here today, as well.

It began many, many years ago. People would come to our country. They would come and they would stay. They would build their families and they would build a better future. After all, they all shared one particular thing in common: the hope, the vision to build a better future for themselves and their families, often for the families they had left behind.

I came as a young lad in 1958, but Italians started to migrate to Canada from the early 1800s. They came and they brought with them their ambition, their skills, their trades, their work ethic, their knowledge, their ingenuity, their will and their heart. And yes, Mr. Rossi, they brought bocce balls and marinara sauce. They brought as well amarone wine, olive oil—extra virgin—and, yes, prosciutto, parmigiano, pecorino; the Armani, the Canali and the Gucci.

But they came over here for one particular reason: to work and build a better future. Those were the times when opportunities were few and they knew very little, so they took whatever they could, often working in, I would say, inhumane conditions, substandard working conditions. They never asked how much the job would pay or when they would get paid. They never asked what kinds of benefits the job offered, if there was a pension plan or any other benefits, any security for their job or any job security in itself.

Some 50 years ago, the disaster at Hoggs Hollow on March 17, 1960, took the lives of five young Italian immigrant workers. The action of Premier Leslie Frost brought the labour laws of the province of Ontario out of the darkness and initiated the most comprehensive labour review in Ontario's history.

But that's in the past, and this is part of our history. Today, Italians have grabbed every opportunity. They saw the opportunity, the entrepreneurial spirit, and they never looked behind. We can be very proud, as with all other immigrants, of their contribution and their accomplishments. I know that Italians are very proud of their contribution and their accomplishments in building Ontario strong.

The multitude of immigrants we have received over the years—and they're still coming—is because of them. We draw from them, from this multitude, which we often call multicultural. I see this wonderful rainbow of cultural people, who came from practically every part of the world, that our country, Canada, and Ontario draw strength from. They give so much of themselves to this new country.

As Italians, I have to say that today they are very passionate Canadians, but within their hearts they still carry the inextinguishable love for their country of origin. It is to them that we owe so much.

I could very briefly say that if it hadn't been for the Sicilians or the calabrese, we wouldn't have a mile of our roads paved. If it hadn't been for the ciociari and abruzzesi—they started the concrete and drain business. The friulani: With their knowledge, their ingenuity and their spirit, they started to build our first high-rises, with the first balconies. So they have a lot to be proud of.

Our province has offered them many opportunities, and, yes, they were there to grab them, as all the other immigrants did.

Comme le sont tous les immigrants, les Italiens sont très fiers de leurs accomplissements et de la contribution remarquable qu'ils ont faite à la croissance de notre province. Je dis que les Italiens à travers toute notre

province seraient très honorés de voir le gouvernement de l'Ontario proclamer le mois de juin le Mois du patrimoine italien, en considération de leurs contributions.

Indeed, I would call on all the members of the House to recognize these wonderful, remarkable contributions and pass second reading of the bill today and move on. Show them, indeed, our appreciation for what they have contributed to the province of Ontario.

It is the immigrants who, when they came many, many years ago—today we enjoy the fruits of their labour. But in those days—those were the times, yes, when they didn't know any better but there was much more. Because of the conditions then, they were exploited. They were abused. They were mistreated, if you will. They were discriminated against. But it's because of the spirit of all our immigrants, no less than the Italians, that they moved on. Today we enjoy this wonderful country, this wonderful province, where their contributions, every one of them, have made it so wonderful for us to live.

The rest is history. Today we have an opportunity, small as it may be—even a speck of our actions will too be part of our history. But it's not totally for us. It is to acknowledge the past, but also to convey something to future generations as well, not only for the Italian history, but for our history, our Ontarian, our Canadian history.

I think it would speak well of this House today if we were to indeed approve second and third reading and be part of that history. So I'm calling on every member of the House today to approve second and third reading of Bill 103 and declare, yes, indeed, June Italian Heritage Month.

I would like to thank everyone who is present here, because they wanted to be present for this historical debate, as they too are part of this wonderful mix: communities; part of those, Italian, that many, many years ago—they still do, but they have contributed so much.

I hope that history will look very favourably on today's actions as we move to just put a little bit of a spot on our young history.

1440

I thank all the members, I thank the co-sponsors and I thank the Premier for allowing me to present this bill, and you, Speaker, for giving me the time to address the House today. In the name of all Italians, I humbly seek your support and approval of Bill 103, to declare the month of June Italian Heritage Month.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am so pleased to co-sponsor Bill 103 with my friend, its author, the member from York West.

I welcome my guests: Frank Notte; former Vaughan MP and Vaughan mayoralty candidate Maurizio Bevilacqua; Sandi Salerno and Rose DiMarco from Thornhill; as well as my wife, Carole, who's sitting in the west gallery with us today.

Contributions of the Italian community to Canada date back 500 years to when John Cabot, or Giovanni Caboto,

first landed on Newfoundland's shores. Early in the 20th century, 60,000 Italian immigrants arrived in Canada to work in forestry, mining and construction. The post-World War II era saw the largest influx of immigration, with over 500,000 Italians coming to Canada, 40% of them settling here in Toronto. In fact, Italian Canadians comprise 15% of my own riding of Thornhill.

The story of Ontario's Italian immigrants is far from unique. The strong bonds of family life and working together, shoulder to shoulder, to build Ontario's infrastructure in the 20th century made the Italian Canadian community strong and vibrant. Their shared experience of working together provided the impetus for the contributions they have made to this great province.

As the economic development critic for our party, I must mention the extraordinary economic contribution made by Italian Canadians. They are, and continue to be, captains of industry. They have excelled in all areas: construction, media, transportation, food production, finance and the law, to name just a few. Together with that incredibly strong sense of community and family bond, the Italian Canadian community took that economic success and gave it back to Ontario. For example, starting as an idea in the late 1960s to build a seniors' home, Villa Charities now provides social assistance, cultural development and educational programs in Toronto and York region.

Like so many others who made Canada their home, Italian immigrants relied on family and friends to find housing and work, learn a trade and a new language. The agency now known as COSTI was set up in the early 1950s to help Italian immigrants navigate their way in a new country, and now provides a wide range of social services to all Ontarians.

As a businessman and an MPP, I have come to know many Italian Canadians, and they are, each and every one of them, a Canadian success story. We should take every opportunity to celebrate these success stories, which is why I am so proud to co-sponsor this bill that will do just that during the month of June each and every year.

While June 24 was declared, in the 1980s, as Giovanni Caboto Day in Ontario, it is just one day. A month of appreciation and celebration is needed to honour the contributions of almost a million Italian Canadians. Viva l'Italia.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Again, just to remind members of the gallery.

The honourable member for Welland.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Now there's a guy who wishes he was Italian.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes.

I'm pleased to join my Calabrian-born colleague Rosario Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina, who co-sponsored this bill—along with Mr. Shurman and Mr. Sergio—to speak to and support this bill.

I'm intimately familiar with the history of Italians in Canada because many of those Italian families who came here at the end of the 19th century and the early part of

the 20th century ended up in Niagara region. Their families have endured and prospered over the course of the 1900s and into this millennium.

As a youngster, as but a four-year-old, I have vivid recollections. We lived in the east end. We lived where immigrant families lived: Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians and my family. We were Rusyn-Slovaks.

Then, when I was around four years old, a new community entered the streets of our east end, and they were these new Italian Canadians, and their children, four and five years old like I was, and I became rapid friends. Their homes became safe havens and their foods became very familiar very quickly. Their families became friends, and I went to elementary and high school with them.

Half of the town of Castropignano moved to Ontario and most of them moved to the Niagara region. I'm so proud and pleased that those Castropignano Italian Canadians have been good friends of mine for so many years.

I say, as we celebrate the industry of Italian Canadians, their courage, their tenacity, their entrepreneurial skill, their doggedness, their willingness to sacrifice—and they did. They sacrificed generation after generation so that their children and grandchildren could live better lives than they did and they ensured that their kids got post-secondary educations and university and college education. They ensured that their children and grandchildren prospered and contributed all that much more to this community.

But they didn't just bring great food. They brought us the legacy of Raphael, the legacy of Dante, the legacy of Puccini, and they introduced us to Fellini. Italian Canadians brought with them a great culture, a rich culture, a valuable culture, an enduring culture and a culture that has enriched ours and made this country far stronger than it would have been without them.

I salute the authors, the sponsors of this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to applaud the Italian heritage in Ontario and am pleased that we've managed to agree to make sure that this bill gets not only second reading but third reading here and now this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Grazie, Mr. Speaker, grazie. I just want to say that my colleague from York West mentioned the friulani, calabresi. He didn't mention the pugliesi who also helped build this country.

Remarks in Italian.

Mr. Mike Colle: Anyway, I want to also say on behalf of—

Mr. Greg Sorbara: I Milanesi.

Mr. Mike Colle: Milanesi, yes. The member from York South-Weston, Laura Albanese, has made her whole life speaking, and because of her throat situation she's unable to speak on this glorious day. Imagine the frustration of our member from York South-Weston. As a fellow pugliesi, I'll try and say a few things on her behalf.

This August, I celebrated 60 years in Canada. We came in August 1950 on a small Greek ship with my

mother and my sister. We joined our father here, so this is certainly a resolution very close to my heart. As you've all been speaking, I just thought of so many incredible memories.

I think the reason why I can see the passion in Mario's voice is because we think of the people who went before us. I think of Johnny Lombardi, one of the incredible pioneers in broadcasting who left such an indelible mark on Canada; Danny Iannuzzi, the great journalist; Nino Ricci, the author; Charles Caccia, the great environmentalist.

I've got an incredible volunteer in my riding, Toni Ciccarelli, who had her fingerprints taken and was arrested in 1940 as an alien at that time. She's still fighting to get her fingerprints back, Toni Ciccarelli. At 92, she's still fighting.

We've got people like Ralph Chiodo who's here, a great business person. Lenny Lombardi is here, another greater broadcaster following in his father's footsteps.

I think of the builders: the DeGasperis family, the Sorbara family, the Montemarano family, the Cortellucci family. All these families came with nothing and they built incredible places to live and house people. They're still doing it.

I think of Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians in London in the music world, the contributions he made with his brother, Carmine. I think of Vittorio Coco, the morning voice of Canada every morning. I think of Gino Cucci, the great man of St. Clair; Ali Bidabadi, who's an honorary Italian, who's always there with his camera everywhere that things are going. There are just so many people who gave so much, never asking anything back but just wanting to work so they could raise their family and their kids could go to school. That's really what they wanted.

1450

I just think of the unnamed workers—we know of the five who died at Hoggs Hollow. I think of my next-door neighbour, Antonio Garisto. He was the first Italian-Canadian foreman for Metro Works, and he used to tell stories about how they used to do all these incredibly complex tunnel-digging exercises—the Beare Road tunnel—and they would do very dangerous work. He, in fact, even had a tunnel collapse on him. He said that what was really hard for him to take was that many of the engineers with the white hats would really have problems figuring out a complex issue. They'd always come to Tony quietly and say, "Tony, we've got a problem here. What do we do?" So Tony, in his broken English, would explain, "If you want to really do this properly and tunnel properly, here's what you do." Then they would follow Tony's instructions and the problem would be fixed. He would sort of stand there with a tear in his eye because, at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the guys with the white hats would get all the pats on the back and poor Tony and the workmen are sitting in the back in their boots, ignored. Those are the unknown workers. There are so many of them.

I tell another story, the Ferma brothers, who told me that when they first started on construction, in the

summertime they were working up at Markham Road. They said that it was so hot, and there was no water on the job site, so the cement truck would come by. That's where they would get their water to get a little bit of nourishment on a hot summer day—the dirty cement truck water.

These are the kinds of sacrifices that these men and women—the women. My mother was a seamstress on Spadina, working piecework, coming home, like many Italian mothers—we had boarders in our house. We had three or four boarders. She would come home, cook, clean, even for the boarders, and then go back to Spadina the next morning at 6 o'clock, sometimes walking home because she didn't want to spend the 12 cents for the streetcar ticket. This is the kind of people they were.

There are people from Portugal now doing the same thing, from Jamaica doing the same thing. This is what truly makes us an incredible country, an incredible province, because these people have put part of themselves into our streets, into our homes, into our buildings, our schools and into this place.

So I feel honoured being here today, being part of this incredible group of people who have called Toronto home. We're so proud of being Canadians, because Canada opened the door for us when nobody else would.

Thank you all so much for listening to us and supporting this very important resolution that really makes us all Italian Canadians today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to have the opportunity to support the bill to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month. As I listened to the member from York West, I realized that many of us in this Legislature have more in common than we do apart. Although I am not Italian, I am, like you, an immigrant from Europe. My mother was Dutch and my father was Austrian. Listening to the member, I do have a keen appreciation and understanding of the many challenges and the many sacrifices that our parents and those who went before us made in order that we could establish new roots, a new life and hope and opportunity.

So today I'm very pleased to support this bill. I have many friends in the Italian community. I live in Kitchener–Waterloo, and I can tell you that I have seen the people there. They have seized every opportunity that has been given to them. They have come with very modest means and they have quickly emerged as valuable contributors to our community in every way possible. They have always demonstrated their desire to contribute and make this province stronger and more vibrant than it is today, and certainly you can say that they do work hard. We see that every day. We have a lot of people who have opened businesses at home, and we see their perseverance in what they have done.

The other thing that I always marvel at and enjoy is that we have a festival. I would say to you that in our community of Kitchener–Waterloo—and it includes Wellington—they have certainly enriched, with their art

and their culture, the social fabric of the province of Ontario. This is an important day.

I want to acknowledge one person from the Kitchener–Waterloo community who I think exemplifies many of the wonderful attributes of Italian Canadians, and that is Dr. Gabriel Niccoli. He was recently appointed to be the honorary vice-consul of Italy to Canada, to serve the counties of Wellington and Waterloo. I am proud to consider and count him as a close friend, and he was recognized for his contribution to preserving the Italian heritage in our community, which he has done. I've had the opportunity to meet many of the visiting dignitaries from Italy.

So today is a great day. Italian Canadians have made an outstanding contribution to our province, and I am very, very pleased to join my colleagues in supporting June as Italian Heritage Month.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was very happy to co-sponsor this bill with the member from York West and the member from Thornhill.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Viva la Calabria!

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Viva la Calabria indeed, and so many other regions in Italy.

I wanted to not congratulate but acknowledge the fact that the consul general is here and the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Toronto District, and so many others. Thank you for coming to participate in this little debate that we're having.

Again, when we introduce bills like this, it forces you to reflect on your past and the present, and also to reflect on where we're going. Because as you reflect on the past—and I've got to tell you, I grew up in the area of Christie Pits. I am one of the few people who has stayed in the area. Me and Lenny Lombardi, and everybody else literally has left the whole downtown area. I remember Italians used to say, "You still live on College Street in those shacks?" Those \$1-million shacks that have more value today than the Woodbridge homes which are three times bigger than our little shacks in downtown Toronto? Yes, I still live downtown. I love it down here. I can't imagine living anywhere else, always wanting to be close to College, where the majority of Italians used to live.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: What about living over on this side?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's another dark side to get into. This is where the lighthouse is.

Mr. David Zimmer: This is the right side, Rosario.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, the right side is here, and the left is here.

I mean, I've got to tell you, the majority of Italians who landed in this city stayed in the city—and in my riding—but we have but a few Italians left. I think we might have close to 1,000 Italian Canadian seniors, and that's about it. It has changed very much.

But I was thinking about this as we reflect on this bill, thinking of my stories. My father came in 1956 with my older brother. I remember a story being told by my father

of going to the north because they were looking for work. There wasn't much work in those Diefenbaker years. And when they went to the north, my father was a heavy smoker. They caught him smoking one evening—he fell asleep with a cigarette in his mouth—and they told him, “If we catch you again, we’re going to send you back to Toronto.” That’s all he needed to hear. Today people need patches, they need drugs to kick the tobacco habit; all my father needed to hear: “If we catch you smoking again”—he was a heavy smoker—“we’re going to send you back to Toronto,” and the economic imperative took over. He needed to work. He needed to call the rest of his family. That’s what made him stop smoking. Lovely story; I never forgot it.

We came in 1962, with the four brothers. My older brother had come, as I said, in 1956. My sister came in 1960. And I went to Ossington/Old Orchard. I was in grade 4 in Italy; they put me back in grade 3. I was there listening to this teacher and I couldn’t understand a single word she was saying. It was a math lesson. She asked me a question; I couldn’t understand it. They moved me to grade 2.

Laughter.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it seems funny today, but what a tragic thing, for a young man who didn’t understand a single word, to be moved to another grade. And I understood math more than the other students did; I just didn’t understand what she was asking me.

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I remember running crying to my older brother, because we had Ossington/Old Orchard on one side—there were two schools, one on Dovercourt, the other one on Ossington—running to the other school, telling my brothers what had happened, in tears. I’m sure I wasn’t the only one. It happened to many Italians and other immigrants. These are sad stories that one doesn’t like telling.

Another sad story: My brother John, in 1962 or 1963, said he was walking down Grace Street with a friend of his, and two policeman in a cruiser stopped him. I asked my brother why, and he said he didn’t know. They were walking down Grace Street, not doing anything, and the cops stopped them and took them for a ride around the city. They even threatened to throw them into the lake. Why would they do that? They didn’t have a clue. Because they could, I guess, in 1962 or 1963. It’s a terrible story to remember.

Being Catholic in those days wasn’t easy either, particularly in the 1920s. Being Catholic was something you hid. When you applied for jobs, you made sure that you didn’t put your religion behind it. Of course, if you happened to have an Italian name, it’s a given what you are. But it was tough to be a Catholic.

And let’s not forget the loitering laws. You weren’t permitted to loiter in the streets. It was a way to make sure that Italians and others didn’t congregate on College Street at the bars or just to chat. It wasn’t until the Charter of Rights that we got rid of those crazy laws, dumb laws.

But look at the sacrifices Italians made, and it wasn’t just Italians; it’s every immigrant. Every immigrant has the same story. My father worked hard in construction. He got up every morning at 6 o’clock until he retired, and when he retired he couldn’t retire, because he didn’t know how to retire. They’re tough stories. It’s not an Italian story; you could put there “Portuguese”; you could put whatever linguistic community or racial community you want. It’s the same story.

So there’s much to celebrate in terms of where we came from and what we accomplished. In all professions of our economy, whether it’s politicians, whether it’s doctors or the more than 600 lawyers we have in Ontario—it doesn’t matter what profession you’re talking about, Italians are well integrated in this society. We now have Conservative politicians who are of Italian origin.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: Misguided, absolutely misguided.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It’s to tell you how much things have changed. And we still have some New Democrats left to tell you that some things never change.

It’s a wonderful history to talk about. I’ve got to tell you, I’m a big promoter of multilingualism. I’m a big promoter of bilingualism. I believe every Canadian should be bilingual. There ought to be no reason not to speak French in this country, and yet we pounce upon Quebecers as if somehow they’re a pariah. I don’t understand; never did. I was a teacher of English and French and proud of it. I speak Italian, not perfectly, but I am proud of that; and I speak Spanish, not perfectly, but I’m proud of that. We should all be multilingual. It’s good for us all.

But I worry about our ability to retain the language. I worry about the commitment we have to be able to maintain our second and third languages. Would that we could, and if we make an effort, we can. It’s good psychologically, it’s good socially, and it’s good economically.

We mustn’t forget the past, should not forget where we are. I remind all of our immigrant brothers and sisters that the new immigrants coming into the country today face the same difficulties and more than we did. Rather than attacking the new immigrants, we should be defending them, as we were attacked. Let’s not do to other immigrants what others did to us. Let’s not forget that as we celebrate this wonderful occasion, and as we celebrate the passing of this bill and as we celebrate that the House leaders have decided that we should move to third reading today and not wait.

Congratulations. Thank you for coming. It’s a great day. Thank you, member from York West, for the initiative and for our ability to co-sponsor with you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It’s indeed a pleasure to take part in this debate to make June Italian Heritage Month. It is so important. I, like my good friend Mike Colle, this year celebrated 50 years—

Mr. Mike Colle: Sixty.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I’ve been 50—I’m much younger than you, Michael—years in this country.

As we grow, as new generations come forward, we tend to forget sometimes. By doing what we are doing here today, it's helping us to remember that heritage.

I was just doing some quick math. Back in 1959, my father came—yes, we are *ciociari*—from Patrica in the province of Frosinone. It was just him. The year after, 1960, my mother, my sister and I came here. Four of us of Italian origin landed in Woodbridge initially, and then I think my father felt sorry for us and moved us to Toronto—Dufferin and Eglinton—because Woodbridge at that time was farms. There was nothing there, except about three feet of snow when I got here in February. I'd never seen snow before. There were four of us. I did the quick math, and there's 31 of us now. I have nine grandkids, four kids all married, and my sister has two kids. Her kids are married with grandkids. My mother is still alive. From four to 31, that is phenomenal.

But it worries me that my kids and my grandkids might not remember where their roots were born. We need to do things like this to remember. For example, I am happy to say that I don't miss too many—on November 13, this year, is the Festa delle castagne in our home town of Patrica. We get together every year, and I meet some of my friends and uncles and cousins who probably only see each other once a year. We need to do more of that.

My father and some of the folks who came before him and even after him, when we look and see, came here with virtually nothing. They left their home, they left their family behind, to come to a country they had no knowledge of whatsoever.

I, too, like my friend Rosario, went to Regal Road public school in grade 5, and they put me in grade 4. The only thing that I could do was math because it was easy to add, it was easy to subtract. There was no language barrier there.

But it was great because Canada embraced us with open arms. We really need to cherish what we have here. I am a proud Canadian by all means, but proud of our heritage. But more so, proud of Canada for truly opening its arms. It allowed us, as immigrants, to be in this House to do what we do. That's something that we as Canadians can really be proud of, because in many places around this world—we read every day in the media about dysfunction, whether it's governments, whether it's communities, whether it's countries, where two religions cannot live together. Yet here allows immigrants to do what we do.

Anything we can do to retain the heritage, not just Italian heritage but from all different parts of the world, is something we should nourish and promote even more and more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I, too, would like to welcome the many representatives from the Italian community today, and a very special welcome to my constituent Mr. Anthony Pullano, who is a renowned artist and a good friend.

I want to commend my colleagues for bringing this bill forward. As the member from York West indicated, his motivation is rooted in very personal feelings. That is understandable to those of us who are immigrants to this country, too.

My story in school: The first day, I didn't understand anything either, but they didn't send me back. I was lucky because it was only grade 1, so there was no place to send me, or they would have sent me back, too.

But somehow we made it. Somehow we have so much to be appreciative of: our culture, our heritage and those who came before us—our parents and grandparents and great-grandparents who made the decision to come to this country because of the opportunity that it represented, not for something that they would receive but for something that they would be able to do. All they were looking for was an opportunity, and so it's appropriate that through this bill today, we honour the memory, we honour that incredible tradition of a work ethic and vision and a pioneering spirit that the Italian community represented.

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When Giovanni Caboto saw the shores of Newfoundland for the first time, he said, "Buona vista"—a beautiful sight. Little did he know at that time that generations of Italian immigrants would come to this shore and would take that beautiful sight and make it into something even better. Whether it's the subdivisions of houses or whether it's the retail stores or the towers of buildings that we have, we have so much to be grateful for to the many Italian professionals and entrepreneurs and financiers who actually took up the challenge to build this great province. And so we have it here.

Just one example: Alfredo DeGasperis, who, once every year, through the United Way's builders' luncheon, raises hundreds of thousands of dollars—this past year, \$600,000, and over the last number of years, more than \$5.5 million—for the good causes of our United Way initiatives and our social services network.

So it's not just about building buildings; it's about building our society and our culture and ensuring that we have a quality of life. To all in the Italian community and this great province of ours, I say thank you. It's appropriate that we honour the Italian community with this special legislation today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Greg Sorbara: This is just an incredibly touching day for me. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague from York West and his co-sponsors for bringing this bill to this Parliament. From now on, June will be the month to remember the great contribution of Canadians of Italian origin to the city, to the province and to the entire nation.

I have, for many years now, represented the largest Italian city outside of Italy: Woodbridge in Vaughan. It is just such a joy, when I walk through my community, to see the vibrant way in which we live our lives there. But in a few moments that I have, I want to make just a couple of points.

First of all, I want to tell you how proud I am as an Ontario parliamentarian how many parliamentarians of Italian origin have set aside their private lives to come and sit in this chamber and serve so magnificently on all sides of the House and how many Italian Canadians have made such a powerful contribution to this great nation. My friend Mike Colle mentioned a few. I think of Frank Iacobucci, who served for so many years and so magnificently as a member of the Supreme Court of Canada.

I want to just tell the story of my own dad coming to this country. He came in 1926 with his mom, his younger brother and his two younger sisters. His dad was already here. His dad had a problem with alcohol. It never left him. Shortly after he arrived, his mom died. He had to look after his dad and his younger family. And then, just to top it all off, the entire continent went into a depression. Life was so hard. I remember the stories of how they had to go to the rail yards after midnight and steal the coal that fell off the coal trucks in order to stay warm. But they never lost their determination to be great Canadians.

By the time I was born, my dad was already a success in business. What I remember from him most powerfully was his passion for this country and his passion for the idea of giving public service.

I remember the day that John F. Kennedy died. I rarely saw my dad cry. I came into the house. He was in front of the television and tears were streaming down his eyes. I think that moment gave me an insight about how important politics is.

As we celebrate the passing of this bill and thank the House for considering doing three readings, I just want to say that for those of us who are Canadians of Italian origin, this is a magnificent moment and a great tribute to my friend from York West, his co-sponsors and all of the members of this Parliament.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month. I'm certainly delighted that it has been sponsored by all three parties of this Legislature, starting with the member from York West, also by the member from Trinity-Spadina and by my own colleague the member from Thornhill.

I can't claim any Italian heritage myself, unfortunately, but I am certainly appreciative of the major contribution that Italian Canadians have made to Canada in terms of literally building our cities, including Toronto, and in three other particular areas. Because I only have a few minutes to speak, I'd like to talk about a couple of things that are important to me where Italian Canadians have made a major impact.

One is on fashion. I don't know that we've talked that much about that this afternoon, but we're all familiar with Armani and Versace and Missoni. We also have very major Italian Canadian fashion designers who are making waves across the world: Franco Mirabelli, Marisa Minicucci and many others. So we're very grateful for

the fashion statements that Italian Canadians have made on the Canadian fashion scene.

The second one is food, and I don't want to talk too much about it, because we all love Italian food, but I just want to relate a personal anecdote about my own cooking experience. I've tried for 25 years to make proper tomato sauce, and I can only say that it was last year that I learned from my good friend Angela Montemarano how to finally do it. So my family is grateful, my sons are grateful and all their roommates at university are extremely grateful that I finally learned how to do it. It's delicious, so thank you very much.

Finally, art. I would like to just comment on a significant donation that was made by Italian Canadians to the Art Gallery of Ontario in April 2007. A \$10-million gift was received from 20 Italian Canadian families, and in recognition of this gift to the Art Gallery of Ontario they named its sculpture promenade the Galleria Italia. I think it's one of the major attractions now at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Six other families have joined since this initiative was started. So we're very grateful to the major contribution that has been made by Italian Canadians, not only to the art world but to music, to opera and to all of the other visual arts. Thank you so much for doing that.

I would, just in the few minutes that are left to me, also like to welcome Saverio Montemarano and Tito-Dante Marimpietri from my home riding of Durham region and Whitby-Oshawa—thank you so much for joining us here today—and all of the other proud Italian Canadians who are here to witness this debate. Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for York West has up to two minutes for his response. Mr. Sergio?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Starting with the member from Whitby-Oshawa, our members from Vaughan, Newmarket-Aurora, Northumberland-Quinte West, Kitchener-Waterloo, Eglinton-Lawrence, Welland and of course my two co-sponsors, thank you for your contributions.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the people who wanted to be present here for the deliberations today. I have my own MP, Judy Sgro, with us today. Thank you for coming. We have the member from I believe it's Etobicoke Centre, Borys Wrzesnewskyj—I hope I did a good job.

I think everybody should be mentioned for coming down today, but I know my colleague—oh, he's here; he's come back, yes. I want our Minister of Labour, Mr. Peter Fonseca, to know that we have a lot of his constituents from Mississauga here. See? They wanted to be present as well. We have the president of COMITES, Mr. Gino Cucchi, and of course the omnipresent Lenny Lombardi. He does so much for our Italian community so well. We have the representative of RAI International; that is the Italian TV station which we get in direct programming now in Canada. I know Cristiano De Florentiis is around somewhere.

With all due respect, he has been mentioned, I think, three or four times. These are the types of people who,

after the 1940s and the 1950s and the 1960s—that's when their imagination really caught, and we have people like Montemarano who built our homes and bridges and the high-rises and everything else.

These are the pioneers, and I have to thank all of you for being here today. Thank you, all the members of the House, for giving the Italian community this wonderful honour today.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This concludes the time allotted for Mr. Sergio's ballot item. For those in the gallery and those watching at home, we will vote on Mr. Sergio's item in about 50 minutes.

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Hillier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to increase the rights of members of trade unions and the duty of trade unions to disclose financial information / Projet de loi 71, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour accroître les droits des membres des syndicats et l'obligation des syndicats de divulguer des renseignements financiers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order number 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 71 is in response to what I think is clear to everyone: the failure of our labour legislation to protect the individual rights and freedoms of members of trade unions and workers throughout the province.

I'd make it known to everyone in this House, if they're not aware now, that the construction and building trades unions are the only sector of our workforce that can be prevented from having a free, fair and open vote to determine if they wish to be represented by a union—the only sector in this province that is obstructed from that concept of having a secret ballot to express their views.

This bill also seeks to address that problem of accountability with the disclosure of financing for unions, to give members a clear view and insight into the financial activities of their union, as well as giving workers a choice to determine what those mandatory dues are used for.

When we look at these items, these are not difficult items; they're not complex items. These are just items that can be easily solved with those time-honoured traditions and conventions that we do with all other sectors of employment and all other businesses in this province, and that is to ensure accountability through transparency and openness, to assure the protection of individual freedoms and rights by allowing choice and providing a mech-

anism where that choice can be expressed freely, as well as using informed consent to solve some of these problems.

In 2008, Nanos polled over 1,000 unionized workers in this country, and the results were quite amazing: 80% of unionized Canadians oppose union leaders giving dues to political parties or putting that money to uses other than collective bargaining rights; almost 70% of unionized Canadians oppose union leaders giving dues to advocacy groups unrelated to their negotiation or bargaining positions; and 90% of unionized Canadians believe a secret ballot must be required when forming or removing a union. I think those are pretty obvious. Those are fundamental Canadian values: that we must have a vote; that money collected is to be used for its intended purposes; and that unions, first and foremost, must be advocates for negotiations and collective bargaining rights. That's from the Nanos poll in 2008.

I will say, because we haven't implemented those time-honoured traditions in our labour laws here in Ontario, we have created very skewed and ineffective employment for those in the building trades unions especially.

I hear from many, many constituents, as a labour critic. I also hear from many employers and employees from around the province. It really is sad when I hear people from all over this province complaining that they are not treated in the same fashion as other sectors.

I've received calls from Arc Electrical, from Good Mechanical in Smiths Falls, from Blenheim Electric, from Eagleson Construction in Peterborough and a host of different contractors and employers. All of them are saying the same thing: that not allowing openness, not allowing secret ballots to determine unionization puts them into a position where their members, their employees, are not treated fairly.

I know that the present legislation was surely not intended to achieve the outcomes that we now face, but all these firms are clear that the present system allows for abuse of process, abuse of authority and prevents the free, informed consent of their employees from being implemented.

It really is amazing to me that we would have such archaic legislation on the books, archaic legislation that prevents people from expressing their democratic freedoms and rights through a secret ballot.

I'm sure everybody in this House would have expected our labour laws to have come into the 21st century long ago. But, no, we still have on the books that building trades and construction workers can be prevented from exercising a vote to determine their collective bargaining rights.

We also see that unions, unlike any other public entity—unlike a charity or unlike a public corporation, which must disclose their financial activities to their shareholders and the public at large—do not have to disclose any of their financial activities.

Indeed, if any of us—when I was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the only

way I could get financial activity on that union local was by going to the United States treasury department, because it's an international union. The United States imposes financial disclosure on all unions in their country, but we do not do that here. I have to go and look at American websites to find out what the financial activities are of my union local here. If you belong to a union that is not an international union, then you have no avenue to find out what those activities are.

Of course, secrecy—or without that openness—does allow for abuse. That's the only place where abuse can happen, if things are not available to be scrutinized by the public, and that goes to the third element of this bill. Some unions, sometimes, use their funds in manners which are not related to collective bargaining rights or to the negotiations, and we don't absolutely know for sure just how much that is because there is no financial disclosure imposed.

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But with what this bill seeks to do, unions will still be allowed to spend their mandatory dues that they've collected on any activity when a member expressly consents. If the union member does not consent to his mandatory dues being used for advocacy or for political activities, then that union cannot deduct that amount. So it puts some checks and balances into the system, and those checks and balances are not unique or revolutionary. These are the same checks and balances that we use for everybody in society: informed consent, free and open secret ballots, and transparency and accountability.

It's a very important bill and it's a very important time that the Ontario Legislature brings our labour laws back in line and out of the Dark Ages, the archaic ages of preventing people from expressing their views democratically. If we are to achieve progress and labour harmony and prosperity, building trades, construction trades must be treated with the same fairness and the same level of protection that all other trades or industrial workers are protected with through legislation. It is quite amazing that this has not been changed yet. I know the Liberal government talks much of protecting labour, recognizing the importance of labour. It's time that we turn that talk into action, that we protect our tradesmen with the same fundamental freedoms that everybody else in this province enjoys: the right to a secret ballot to express their wishes and full financial disclosure for public unions so that their members understand and can scrutinize what those financial activities are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, let me make it clear. New Democrats couldn't disagree more. We not only don't support this bill; we'll vote against it.

Let's be clear: The labour union movement, the trade union movement, is the single most important institution in our society in the promotion and creation of social and economic justice, more so than any other institution, including, quite frankly, Parliaments.

Most recently, in the course of the last 40 and 50 years, it has been the trade unions and labour unions that

have advanced the cause of feminism, and that is equal rights for women; that have attacked sexism; that have attacked homophobia; and that have attacked racism. It's a trade union movement's role in these movements against racism, sexism and homophobia that is in the largest part responsible for breaking through some pretty formidable barriers to some pretty big chunks of our communities.

The union is more relevant now than ever, as we are being confronted with the ugly, dangerous realities of globalization. I remember back in 1988, along with so many other people, when Ed Broadbent and New Democrats opposed the Brian Mulroney free trade deal. We predicted grave harm to the Canadian economy and to what there was of Canadian culture. And while we weren't entirely sure as we warned people about the consequences of free trade, now, after a relatively short period of free trade—and then, of course, Jean Chrétien couldn't help himself but join and ally with Brian Mulroney and expand free trade. He didn't care about the free trade deal. Jean Chrétien, the Liberal, of course expanded free trade to the North American free trade agreement. And then globalization, all of that which was predicted, has turned out to be truer and more frightening and more awesome than any of us even imagined in 1988.

I note that Statistics Canada, with what appears to be its most recent analysis, in 2006, identifies the unionization rate in Ontario at approximately 28%. Interesting; nationally it's at 32%. I suspect that that rate is much lower now because of the loss of jobs, mostly industrial jobs, over the course of the last four and five years—thank you very much, Premier McGuinty—some 300,000-plus, and a large chunk, if not the biggest chunk, of those jobs were unionized jobs. What does that mean? It means that they were better-paying jobs than they would have been if they were non-union jobs. What it means is that those workers were far more likely to have pension plans. It means that those workers were far more likely to have health benefits plans. It means that those workers were far more likely to have a greater degree of control over safety in their workplace. I not only oppose this legislation; I bemoan the fact that more workers aren't unionized.

Of course, Premier McGuinty's stubborn and discriminatory stance against agricultural workers—because the Premier of this province, Premier McGuinty, persists in insisting that agricultural workers, workers in some of the most dangerous occupations in North America, notwithstanding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, don't have a right to be a part of a trade union and collectively bargain. Because we know—we know, we know, we know—that a unionized workplace is a safer workplace. And we know, we know, we know that agricultural workers—we're talking about the corporate farms. We're not talking about the family farm, we're talking about the corporate farms.

We heard this morning from Ms. DiNovo, when she questioned the Minister of Labour about the failure to

inspect those farms, especially in light of recent deaths and a legacy of far too many deaths over the course of the years. We know that unionized workplaces are safer workplaces, because workers have, through the collective bargaining process, a greater degree of control over safety in the workplace and are better-educated about their rights to refuse unsafe work, for instance.

I find some of the arguments disingenuous. The Ontario Labour Relations Act contains section 92, and subsection 92(1) is the duty of unions to furnish financial statements to members: "Every trade union shall upon the request of any member furnish the member, without charge, with a copy of the" latest "audited financial statement of its affairs."

The sponsor of this bill seems to have a problem with social unionism and may embrace the Gompers-style unionism that permeated a whole lot of the American union movement. He and I disagree very fundamentally on that perspective. As a matter of fact, in an interesting book, *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Story of Labor in America*, by Philip Dray, it is the view of that author that it is to our detriment that unions, and he's speaking in the context of the United States, "have lost their reformist zeal. To regain it, he says, they must in the 21st century reinvigorate their historic role as campaigners for social justice and work with global partners 'in environmental, development and human rights issues.' With high unemployment concentrating labour's minds on the here and now," it is proposed that "he will find"—he, the author, Mr. Dray—"it hard to get a hearing" for his proposal.

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We have a duty, it seems to me, as unionized workers, when we're fortunate enough to be in a unionized workplace, to advance the interests of workers not just in our own community and not just in our own workplace but in other parts of North America and in other parts of the world. Indeed, the argument has been made far too often, yet not heeded, that Canadian workers will compete with any worker anywhere on the world but on a level playing field. The way to achieve that level playing field, of course, was to ensure that those workers are unionized too, be they in Mexico, be they in Thailand, be they in any of those places in the world, like the Philippines, where a whole lot of the low-wage labour produces a whole lot of products that have become the mainstay in the world of the Canadian consumer.

We have section 92. The sponsor of this bill seems to be perturbed that Mr. McGuinty gave card-based certification rights to construction workers. New Democrats are perturbed that he didn't give it to every worker in the province. Unionization is at 28%—and I suspect it's lower than that because that was in 2006. The recovery that Mr. McGuinty brags about is very much a jobless recovery. Where there are jobs, they tend to be lower-wage jobs and non-union jobs. It's our view as New Democrats that the Walmart worker should have the same rights, when it comes to forming a union and collective bargaining, as the construction worker. That

means that when a clear majority of those workers have signed union cards, indicating their interest in belonging to a union and engage in collective bargaining, there should be a recognition of that and a certification of them as a union.

We have secret ballot votes with but 40% of workers in a non-construction industry. We have secret ballot votes, but we also know that companies like the Walmarts of the world will go to great lengths to abuse and intimidate those workers, whether it's Walmart, whether it's the workers at Casino Niagara, whether it's the workers at any other number of workplaces.

I'm in one of those difficult positions where 12 minutes clearly wasn't sufficient. I'm simply going to create a record here for Hansard that I don't think has existed yet. I rely upon the words of that great songsmith Woody Guthrie:

There once was a union maid
Who never was afraid
Of goons and ginks and company finks
And deputy sheriffs who made the raids.
She went to the union hall
When a meeting it was called,
And when the Legion boys come 'round
She always stood her ground.
This union maid was wise
To the tricks of company spies;
She couldn't be fooled by a company stool
She'd always organize the guys.
She always got her way
When she struck for better pay.
She'd show her card to the National Guard
And this is what she'd say:
"Oh, you can't scare me; I'm sticking to the union."

The unions are the healthiest thing we have in our society as we are forced into globalization. If anything, this government should be condemned for its anti-union stance, for its refusal to revive anti-scab legislation. New Democrats are 100% in support and will fight for anti-scab legislation.

This government demonstrates its anti-worker stance for its refusal to allow agricultural workers to belong to unions and collectively bargain. New Democrats stand firmly in support of agricultural workers and the right to form a union and collectively bargain.

This government displays its anti-labour stance when it refuses to extend historic—card-based certification is an historic reality for workers, taken away in the darkest days of the Mike Harris government. Of course, Mike Harris found an ally in the newly anointed Premier McGuinty in his first term, when Premier McGuinty aligned himself with the worst of the Harris policies when it came to working women and men.

My father was a unionized worker. He was an immigrant. I owe a great deal to the union and the union movement. It kept five kids well-fed. It got five kids through high school and into college and university. And it wasn't just my family; it was thousands of other

families. The union and the union movement is responsible for the existence of a working middle class in this country. This government and its predecessor are responsible for the erosion and the attack on that working middle class.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: It's a pleasure to join in this debate. I am opposed to this bill that's been brought forward by the member for Lanark-Frontenac. The thrust, the heart of this bill will rip the guts out of responsible union administration, and I say that with a feeling that that is what's really going to happen.

My father was a card-carrying member of the old UAW, United Auto Workers, which was the predecessor to the current CAW. A lesson that I learned at my father's feet was that a responsible union movement could do a lot, has done a lot and will continue to do a lot to improve the lives of the workers.

Now, what does my friend the member from Lanark-Frontenac's bill do? It sets back the labour relations regime here in Ontario that has existed for years and years and years. This government, working with the union movement, working with the employers, has established a regime of labour relations which is second to none in Canada and in North America. That regime is based on a certain balance between the ambitions and the needs of the union, the ambitions and needs of the employer, and, indeed, the ambitions and needs of the public at large. We in Ontario have a reputation throughout the country, throughout North America, for having got that balance right.

If you read the member for Lanark-Frontenac's bill carefully, it tips the relationship, that balance, so much, so far to the employers' side that it will set back the peace in the labour relations movement, I dare say, years and years and years. That setback is not in the interests of the employer, and if you talk to responsible employers, they don't want to see that balance disturbed; if you talk to the responsible union movement, they do not want to see that balance disturbed; and the members of the voting public don't want to see that balance disturbed.

Why don't we want to see that balance and that relationship disturbed or tilted in favour of one party or the other? That is because Ontario's manufacturing economy and, indeed, our economy broadly speaking, is founded on a healthy employer-employee relationship. This bill will just rip the guts out of that relationship.

Let me just point out one example. When you read the bill through, one of the things that it contemplates is that there will be all sorts of restrictions on what unions can do with the dues that they collect from their employers, and the sort of implicit intent of the bill is to say to the union, "You can't use union dues for a whole raft of things, a whole raft of initiatives, a whole raft of public initiatives and so on." That provision is designed to really neuter the public voice of the union.

Now, that provision isn't going anywhere because the Supreme Court of Canada has already ruled on that particular issue in a case called Lavigne and the Ontario

public service, where there was a movement to prevent the union from collecting fees and spending those fees for public education and that sort of thing. The Supreme Court of Canada clearly said, "No, a union can collect fees for that purpose, and it can use the fees for those sorts of purposes." This bill that we're debating this afternoon, in effect, says to the Supreme Court of Canada, "You got it wrong. We're going to go ahead and put these restrictions on how unions can use their dues."

1550

I say to the member from Lanark-Frontenac, he's got it dead wrong. The responsible labour and employer parties in this balance that I refer to understand that the unions have that latitude, and the Supreme Court of Canada has agreed. So I say to the member for Lanark-Frontenac, you have got a real uphill battle in this ill-planned thinking that you've got to rip the guts out of the union movement.

My friend opposite from Welland referred to a Woody Guthrie song. I, too, know that song, and my father has got part 2 of that song. I'm going to put part 2 on the record just so we've got the full thing here. It refers to the wives and girlfriends of union workers:

You gals who want to be free, just take a tip from me;
Get you a man who's a union man and join the ladies' union auxiliary.

Married life ain't hard when you got a union card,
A union man has a happy life when he's got a union wife.

I remember my father singing that song to my mother from time to time when she would get a bit exasperated with him.

Anyway, back to my serious point: If you take the 30,000-foot view of this private member's bill, what it's designed to do is to disturb this—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Destroy.

Mr. David Zimmer:—"destroy," my friend beside me said—yes, to destroy this very delicate and proper and working balance that we in Ontario have achieved over years. It's been a struggle from all parties' sides, from the union side, from the employer side, from the public side. But we've got a balance there. We disturb that delicate balance at its peril.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to take a moment to welcome to the Legislature this afternoon a former Speaker, the Honourable Alvin Curling, member for Scarborough-Rouge River and member for Scarborough North, in the 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th and 38th Parliament. Congratulations, sir. Welcome.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward. The member from Lanark-Frontenac, I believe, has brought this legislation forward with the best of intentions, and I found it quite interesting when I listened to my colleague from the Liberal side of the House and his representation of this legislation.

I'm not at all surprised by my colleague from Niagara—is it Niagara?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Welland. In Niagara.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's close.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's in Niagara.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's in Niagara, from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm not surprised by the member from Welland because the man has principles—principles I don't agree with, but he has principles. I'm sure that even my colleague the member from Lanark-Frontenac didn't expect that the member from Welland would support this, because we know where this honourable colleague stands.

However, when we listened to the members of the Liberal caucus—and I'm sure, one by one, they will say the same thing: how terrible this is and how this will absolutely destroy the union movement and somehow disturb this perfect balance that this government has achieved between labour and management.

Let's investigate this a little more carefully. This perfect balance that's been achieved by the Liberal government under the leadership of Premier McGuinty is, on the one hand, saying to a certain segment within the union movement—a certain trade, the construction trade—that they should have a right that no other trade should have.

Well, there's balance, the McGuinty definition of balance: "I'll do it for one group." Why? Perhaps, if you investigate why, you might find out that there are some pretty powerful people behind that lobby, that there was something owed by the McGuinty government to that particular lobby and that particular sector, and that's why they were given this right that no other trade union and no other trade was given. This same argument—I'm anxious to hear from the Liberal caucus as to why.

As the member from Welland said, based on his consistent principles, all workers should be able to unionize, to organize. Not according to Dalton McGuinty—not that I agree with that. I'm simply saying that you can't argue on the one hand that you've achieved this perfect balance, and argue on the one hand how important the ability to unionize is to workers in this province, but you don't give it to some. I find the argument absolutely inconsistent, but that inconsistency is consistent with the way the McGuinty government delivers policy in this province.

What really is at stake here? What is the member asking in his legislation? This, the same thing that every reasonable person in the province of Ontario asks when they make a decision that is of significant importance and they want to do so in confidence. They're asking for a simple thing, and that's called a secret ballot.

Sixty per cent of members of every other union have the right to express their opinions by way of secret ballot. I wonder what it is about the construction trade that somehow those workers are not entitled to that same right. Where is the balance? I ask the McGuinty Liberal caucus. I don't know how you square that. I simply don't know how you square that.

The second thing that is being asked for is full disclosure of the financial dealings of the union organ-

ization. The minute that someone talks about not being willing to make full disclosure, you have to automatically ask the question: "Why?" If there's nothing to hide, then why make a fuss about this simple request? That's all it is: disclosure, full disclosure.

I am surprised, frankly. We have heard nothing but the need for full disclosure from this government. They talk the game. They are going to ensure full accountability, full disclosure by their cabinet ministers and by their government. Why would you not ask the same of a union organization that collects multi-millions and billions of dollars from hard-working Ontarians every single week? Why do those employees not have the right to know where those union dues go and what they're used for?

If we want to be fair, I would also think that it would be appropriate that if those members of that particular union, as an example, do not want their union dues to be used to support a particular political party or a particular cause that they have objections to—why would they not be given that right? It seems to me that that would simply be fair. What is it? I know how the member from Welland justifies that. I don't understand how the Liberal caucus can justify that and claim to be consistent, claim to be for transparency and claim to be for fairness.

1600

Finally, the final point in this bill simply talks about getting confirmation, direction and authorization from the union members as to how those funds are going to be used which are deducted from their cheques every week. I don't know how else you can explain this other than that we want workers to have control over where their dues are going. That is a simple request and I think is something that should be done.

I rest my case. I'm anxious to hear from other Liberal caucus members who are going to debate this as to how they square doing one thing on the one hand and something else on the other. It's absolute inconsistency and absolute contradiction in their position.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 71 this afternoon.

It's interesting. Normally I have morning House duty on Thursday, but I had to come back this afternoon. I was at the CAW retirees meeting this morning in Peterborough and had the opportunity to chat with some of my good friends there: Bill Woodbeck, who has been a long-time labour leader in Peterborough, who is the president of the CAW retirees; and my good friend Norm Wedlock, who is the secretary for the CAW retirees.

I come to this perspective from a very personal review. It's interesting: Most of the CAW retirees in Peterborough—the member from Welland may want to hear this—of course were formally members of the UEW. My late father, who worked for GE in Peterborough for some 40 years, was a chief steward for the UEW, and I remember as a very young guy reading some of the interesting writings of C.S. Jackson, who was the long-time president of the United Electrical Workers in

Ontario and Canada and indeed was viewed as one of the labour leaders post World War II in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Dave Levac: Do you know any Woody Guthrie songs?

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, I don't have any of those.

It's interesting, when you look at the labour movement in Peterborough in the mid 1960s, General Electric of course provided the land for the establishment of Trent University in Peterborough, and the UEW, which was then representing the workers in Peterborough, designed a check-off plan to support the building of Trent University on the premise that maybe the sons and daughters of GE employees would indeed attend that university, which was the case for me personally.

We heard earlier today a very eloquent speech by the member from York West dealing with Bill 103, the act to proclaim Italian heritage day in June. He talked about the issue of Hoggs Hollow in 1960, when five young Italian Canadians died in a labour accident. Out of that, he talked about the history, the then-Premier of Ontario, Mr. Frost, bringing in new labour relations laws in the province to protect workers.

Of course, we believe in fair and balanced labour laws, which have been the foundation of this province's prosperity for many decades. We also recognize that the Labour Relations Act, 1995, contains the long-standing financial accountability provision for unions and their members. We know that unions in Ontario are required to provide a copy of an audited annual financial statement if it is requested by a union member. If a union member complains that the statement is not complete, the Ontario Labour Relations Board may order the trade union to prepare another audited financial statement. An employee of any bargaining unit across the province of Ontario who believes that his or her union has acted in a manner that is arbitrary, discriminatory or in bad faith in its representation may file a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Unions that administer vacation pay, health or pension funds are required to provide a copy of their annual financial statement that discloses salaries, fees and commissions charged to the fund, to the union members, if indeed it is requested.

Over the last number of years, we have provided, of course, through Bill 144—the McGuinty government, our government, gave construction workers the right of electing to apply for certification under the vote-based regime or under the new card-based regime, and of course, under the card-based regime, if more than 55% of employees in the proposed bargaining unit are members of the union, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the discretion to certify the union without a vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of the Defending Employees' Rights Act that we've got before the House this afternoon. It's interesting to see the shift in politics here. People understand where a Progressive Conservative caucus would

come from and they certainly understand where the New Democratic caucus would come from, but once again, the government members are floundering around trying to take an easy balance.

I think this is really about transparency. I don't see where this is—I think it was the member for Willowdale who said it was earth-shattering and that it would rip the guts out of unions. That's not what this is about at all. It is absolutely pathetic to think that way.

But it would end card-based certification, mandating that a business can only be unionized on a free and open vote of its employees. I don't think that's such a terrible thing to ask anybody. My God, I think this is better than doing some sneaky thing behind the scenes. If you have a free vote and people have an opportunity to voice their concerns, and when the whole group agrees to unionize, so be it.

I can tell you one thing that doing this will help. It will support some of the small businesses that are already struggling like you wouldn't believe in this economy. I have had a number of them in central Ontario that have come forward, and they've just basically shut their doors. Somebody said, "You're going to be unionized tomorrow under the current laws," and they can't support that. They don't have the financial resources to move ahead, and so the business shuts down, the trucks are put on the market and sold off somewhere, and everyone is out of a job then.

The second thing it does is mandate full yearly financial disclosure of union spending with itemized reports of all payments over \$5,000. Is that earth-shattering? Is that going to tear the guts out of the union, because you ask for disclosure of spending of over \$5,000?

Third, a union would be forced to get a waiver from any member before using their dues for anything other than collective bargaining.

I think that people who are members of any kind of a union, when they spend a large portion of their salary on their union dues, should know exactly where that money is going. I think that's only fair. That's like the Legislative Assembly saying, "We're not going to check into anything that you spend it on." They check every penny we spend here.

I would expect that if you're a member of a union, and those are hard-earned dollars—whether you're a union member or a non-union member, they're hard-earned dollars that you earn, and if somebody else is in control of that money, I think you would like to have an opportunity to have a say in how that money is actually spent.

I think this is a great discussion, and it will be interesting to see how the vote goes here this afternoon. I hope the people at home who have companies that are teetering on the verge of not being around at all and people who may not have job opportunities for other business in the future will watch the outcome of this particular vote here this afternoon.

I thank my colleague for bringing it forward. It's been an interesting debate to hear the three—well, the two

sides. We've heard the third party side. We never really heard what the government members support here. They floundered around everything. They would say only that it's going to tear the guts out of the union movement.

I'm glad to see the minister in the House. I thought he would want to comment on this today. It's a labour bill, and—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No; no minister is making any kind of a comment today.

It's been a pleasure to make a few comments, and I will be supporting this legislation.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Mr. Hillier, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I found it interesting during the debate that we learned that both the NDP and the Liberal Party learned their political philosophy and concepts of law from a Woody Guthrie songbook. That was the most interesting part of that.

Now, I think it's also important that we understand that both the NDP and the Liberal Party would deny trade unionists the ability, freedom and right to choose. That's what they're saying here. The speakers today will deny trade unionists the ability, the freedom and the right to choose.

It should be obvious to everyone in this House that you cannot have responsibility without scrutiny, you cannot have accountability without disclosure and you cannot have democracy without a vote. Those are understandable, fundamental concepts, but both parties are willing to prevent and obstruct trade unionists from having a vote. Presently, they do not allow the opportunity to have a secret ballot by all employees of a firm. I find it incredible that the elder statesmen for the New Democratic Party would deny trade unionists that fundamental freedom. But if Woody Guthrie is your most important political philosopher and teacher of law, I guess we can understand where this is coming from.

Freedom: We need scrutiny, we need disclosure and we need secret ballots in the building trades unions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired.

VISUAL FIRE ALARM SYSTEM ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SYSTÈMES D'ALARME-INCENDIE À AFFICHAGE VISUEL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item 37, standing in the name of Mr. Arthurs.

Mr. Arthurs has moved second reading of Bill 76, An Act respecting visual fire alarm systems in public buildings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Arthurs?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'd like to send it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered.

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item 38, standing in the name of Mr. Sergio.

Mr. Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

ITALIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ITALIEN

Mr. Sergio moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 103, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine italien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

DEFENDING EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DES EMPLOYÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 39.

Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 71, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to increase the rights of members of trade unions and the duty of trade unions to disclose financial information

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1614 to 1619.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hillier, Randy

Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm
Shurman, Peter

Sterling, Norman W.
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Chiarelli, Bob
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Fonseca, Peter
Jaczek, Helena

Johnson, Rick
Kormos, Peter
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza

Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Takhar, Harinder S.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed.

Just before I call orders of the day, let's congratulate and thank—and wish them well—all of our pages.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, October 18 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1622.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Lundi 18 octobre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 octobre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's my pleasure to introduce Colleen Hochgeschurz, the mother of Carina, who is a new page here today. Carina comes from the county of Lanark in the municipality of Mississippi Mills. I'm sure she's going to have a great time here. Her mom is staying with her for the three weeks' duration.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm pleased to introduce some family that are here. We have a new page from North Bay, Nicholas Waltenbury. I know his member isn't here this morning, so I want to welcome Nicholas, but particularly his mom, Dawn Waltenbury, my cousin, and Nicholas's grandma and grandpa, Tom and Marilyn Campbell from Prescott. Welcome to the House.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, j'ai de la visite aujourd'hui, des gens de Chelmsford qui sont ici parce que leur petite-fille sera page avec nous. Il s'agit de M^{me} Louise Tessier et M. Guy Tessier. Bienvenue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to introduce my uncle Tony Connor and my aunt Helen Connor, visiting from the UK, and my mother, Sally Tabuns, visiting from faraway Hamilton.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: In the gallery today are members of the Burlington community who are here with the MS Society. I would like to introduce to you Carole Ward—wave, Carole—and Ross Bell and Joan Gallagher-Bell. Hi, guys.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome the members from the MS Society, but more specifically Mike Roche, from my riding of Durham, and I believe John Daley is here as well. Welcome to Queen's Park. Your presence here today is important.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to introduce some guests in our gallery today. They are here with our new page Marie-Josée Vercouteren. Her dad, Peter Vercouteren, is here; grandmother Mary Ellen Vercouteren; grandfather Ted Vercouteren; grandmother Louise Tessier; and grandfather Guy Tessier. Would you welcome them all, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome as a guest from the MS Society

in the Speaker's gallery Cathy Topping; her assistant, who is with her today, Stephenie Inglis; and Cathy's cousin Fred Cass, who is a former Speaker of the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANT

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question, in the absence of the Premier, is to the energy minister. Minister, how much exactly will Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member that we do not make references to attendance.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, how much will Ontario families now have to pay for Premier McGuinty's sudden decision to backtrack on the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We have heard a number of uninformed figures being thrown about by the opposition on this particular issue, and let me say this: Those figures are nothing but typical opposition fearmongering.

I guess my question to the Leader of the Opposition—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We didn't even get one minute into question period and I'm finding it difficult to hear. Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: A few weeks ago, Tory members were standing up in this very Legislature, saying that they didn't want to see us put this gas plant in Oakville. Today, after we've made this important decision, a decision that only became possible because of the important investments this government has made, investments that those guys opposed every step of the way—every one of those 8,000 megawatts that we've created made this decision possible. Those guys opposed every one of those megawatts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, with due respect, this is a very serious question that families and ratepayers across the province are concerned about. We would like a serious answer.

1040

Clearly, you must have presented to cabinet the plan to backtrack on the Oakville gas plant. You have had advice from your advisers or the Ontario Power Authority on

exactly what the costs would be to backtrack and to effectively rip up that contract. Minister, I know you might not be able to pinpoint the exact value but perhaps you can tell us the range of costs on your decision to backtrack on Oakville. Minister, just inform the House: What did you tell cabinet would be the cost of making this decision?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question from the member opposite and I'm pleased to respond. I can tell him that indeed we know the costs, if there are any at all, would not even be close to the fearmongering numbers that he and his colleagues have been putting out over the last week.

I can tell you this: We are in positive discussions with TransCanada. They've played an important role in our energy system; they've been an important part of our energy system in the past; they will indeed be in the future.

I can tell you this: Because of the investments that we've made—the 8,000 new megawatts, the 1,700 megawatts we've saved in conservation because of diminishing demand—we are in a position not to have to build a gas plant that indeed our long-term planning indicated was not going to be necessary. This is a responsible decision, both from a fiscal perspective and from an energy perspective. We're very proud of the role that our local MPP, Kevin Flynn—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister's and the Premier's answers get increasingly puzzling about their decision to backtrack on the Oakville plant. The minister now seems to imply that maybe there are no costs, if I heard him correctly, for ripping up the contract that you had signed some time ago.

I don't think people believe that there is no cost, quite frankly, Minister, to ripping up a signed contract for what was a \$1.2-billion power plant. Steven Paget, an analyst with FirstEnergy Capital, indicates that families may be on the hook for a substantial amount. There are media reports that cite a legal opinion saying that the company may be entitled to up to \$1 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister just said I'm wrong again. Clearly, Minister, if you are getting paid by the taxpayer, you must have brought in the costs to cabinet. Why don't you just tell the public how much we're on the hook to pay for a power plant that will produce no power whatsoever?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Here we go again. The opposition is throwing out figures that are uninformed and nothing short of opposition fearmongering.

Let's be very, very clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Oxford.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let's be very, very clear. We made a decision based on the fact that we made very

important investments that put us in a position to use a transmission solution rather than build a 950-megawatt plant in Oakville. Had we listened to the member opposite, had we listened to the leader of the NDP on this when they opposed us every step of the way as we were building this new 8,000 megawatts of power, we would not have been able to make that decision and indeed, had we adhered to the policies of his party and the NDP, there would have been a plant going into Oakville. Because of the important decisions we've made, we're able to ensure that we can do this through a transmission solution that will ensure that these—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now to the Minister of the Environment: Minister, your Premier has set a world record for backtracks in the past six months. He backtracked on the sex ed curriculum to start with grade 1. It's basically sex classes for six-year-olds. He backtracked on the microFIT rates for solar power. He backtracked on Super Corp. He backtracked on mixed martial arts and he backtracked on his plan to ban chocolate milk in schools—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Infrastructure will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: But honest to goodness, even Dalton McGuinty outdid himself when he flip-flopped—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member of the use of names in the chamber.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty outdid himself when he flip-flopped on the Oakville gas plant and on eco taxes within five days. He backtracked so fast he gave everybody whiplash.

Let me ask you: When it comes to the eco taxes, is this a full backtrack, is it a half-backtrack or is it something that the Premier plans to bring in if he gets re-elected?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the leader for the question. We listened to consumers. Consumers told us that on July 1—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the member from Renfrew: I would like to hear the answer; I was able to hear the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please don't be challenging the Chair.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: On July 1, Stewardship Ontario rolled out a program in this province. They didn't tell consumers that it was coming. They did not come up with the least expensive solution, and they did not come up with the most practical solution. So we

listened to consumers, and they were very loud and they were very clear. They want to do their part to keep hazardous materials out of our landfills, but they expect a program that, first, they can understand; second, that it is the most practical solution; and third, that it is the solution that costs the least amount of money.

Listening to that, I made a determination that the program that was rolled out on July 1 met none of those criteria. That's why we permanently cancelled that program, listening to the consumers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, you were there at the cabinet table when Premier McGuinty brought this plan forward. You weren't environment minister but you were there at the cabinet table, as I recall, when Premier McGuinty allegedly said that when it comes to the eco tax grab, "We can't do this fast enough." That's the exact quote reported in the media from one of your fellow colleagues at cabinet.

I'm proud that the Ontario PC Party stood with hard-working families, fought this tax grab, caught you in the cookie jar and forced you to do a U-turn. But now we worry that these guys will just bring it back.

Minister, on August 12 in the Flamborough Review, you said that when it came to the eco tax program, it was "the right way to go." Then on October 12, you did a backtrack.

Minister, which Minister Wilkinson do we believe: the one of August 12 or the one of October 12? Ontario families can't tell.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would say that I have been very, very consistent that the good people of Ontario want to keep hazardous materials out of the landfills. When you were in government, those very materials were getting into landfills. We've done something about that. We have a number of programs to ensure that hazardous material stays out of our landfills. That's why last year alone, some 91,000 tonnes of used tires were redirected from our landfills and are creating new products, which result in new jobs. It's why there are tens of thousands of tonnes of hazardous waste electronics which today are being recycled and diverted in the province of Ontario.

We are keeping those programs. But when it comes to the program that was rolled out on July 1, which was neither practical nor understandable nor communicated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: —nor the least expensive program, we decided that that needed to be permanently cancelled. That's why we've done that.

We're going to keep the things that are working. We made sure that the program that the good people of Ontario did not understand and did not feel was appropriate, where it was applied to items where it just didn't make any sense—we cancelled that permanently.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I don't think anybody buys this babe-in-the-woods routine. You were there at cabinet that authorized this program when Premier McGuinty sold it to you. You were there on July 1, when he tried to sneak it in under the shadow of the HST. Minister Wilkinson himself said on August 12 that it was the right thing to do. Then on October 12, we saw a different Minister Wilkinson.

We also saw that the previous minister had a plan to bring them in on automobiles, snowmobiles and ATVs. Now this minister has tossed the previous minister to the wind and says he had nothing to do with that plan.

I don't think people buy it. Honest to God, he takes so many positions, it's like Premier McGuinty's top adviser is a Magic 8 Ball.

Minister, just come clean. What is the actual plan here? How can we have any faith whatsoever in a Premier who says one thing one day and then backtracks and says the opposite the next?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Exactly which Progressive Conservative caucus is speaking today? I have a quote from your colleague Bob Bailey, who is the member for Sarnia-Lambton, who said on October 13, "I applaud the government for this"—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. He used the riding name and the name.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To clarify the ruling, you should be using the riding name alone.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Everyone in this House knows that the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton is in that member's caucus, and he applauded us on October 13.

What I find interesting is that we have a clear contrast in the province of Ontario: a party opposite that wants the greenbelt gone, that wants the coal plants to stay open and that did not even vote for the Clean Water Act; on this side of the House, we're listening to consumers, but more importantly, we are keeping hazardous waste out of our landfills. That's why we're working with our municipal partners. That's why we're ensuring that the programs that are working are staying. We are committed to making sure that they are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Later today, the Ontario Energy Board is going to tell Ontario families just how much more they're going to be paying for electricity. The announcement won't be bringing any relief to Ontario families who need a break on their hydro bills.

As we head into winter, why won't the McGuinty government give families some relief and simply take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I too am looking forward to seeing the Ontario Energy Board releasing today their regulated price plan. This is another indication of the way that this government has reformed our energy sector. As the Ontario Energy Board takes a good look at projecting what our costs for energy are going to be every six months, we're able to bring some certainty to consumers and to businesses so that they know what the next six to 12 months will bring in terms of increasing or decreasing rates, whatever that may be. I'm looking forward to the work that the OEB has done. I think we'll see later on today exactly where that's going. I'm looking forward to being able to provide some certainty to consumers in the coming six to 12 months.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families are looking for relief, and this government simply looks the other way.

Suzette Desroches, a single mom, writes this: "I live in a two-bedroom apartment and am paying about \$200 a month and this is without even turning my heat on ... God help us when winter arrives."

I ask again: Why won't this government take the HST off of hydro and give people like Ms. Desroches a much-needed break?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We certainly recognize the challenges that Ontario families have been going through in this province, whether it be adjusting to the changes that the global recession has brought to Ontario families or whether it be the fact that, yes, energy rates are increasing.

But this leader, time and time again, during the course of this session, has stood on her feet to oppose these important investments. The NDP have shifted from the principles that they once had—principles that would have said that we need to build a strong energy system, that we need to make investments in generation, that we need to make investments in reliability and that we need to get out of dirty coal.

We're not going to be able to get out of dirty coal if we go the NDP route and not make those investments. The NDP want to take us back to where the Tories had us seven years ago. I think if I were an NDP member today, listening to the rhetoric coming from the side opposite, I would say, "Where did you lose your"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last month, the Premier promised a lower off-peak electricity rate, but people don't want more tinkering on their hydro bills; what they want is a real break.

Debrah Habinski writes, "Since the smart meter and the HST, my hydro bill has doubled."

Why won't this government give Ms. Habinski and her family a break by simply taking the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It was only weeks ago—and I guess the leader of the opposition has forgotten—that this government came forward, through the leader-

ship of our Premier, with the energy and property tax credit. Two thirds of seniors across this province are going to get relief from that tax credit. It's going to go to lower- and middle-income people and assist them in adjusting to the increasing rates.

If we were to listen to the party opposite, we would be going back to where we were seven years ago. We need to make these important investments. I would think the NDP, of all parties, would recognize how important it is to invest in generating the power we're going to need to provide to Ontario families going forward into the future, to invest in a reliable system and to invest in moving away from dirty coal so we can clean our air and provide better health outcomes for our kids and grandkids. That's what it's all about and it's time the NDP recognize that they should be standing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew.

New question?

POWER PLANT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Last week, the McGuinty government cancelled its agreement with TransCanada on the Oakville gas plant. New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so. But the Liberals only agreed when their jobs were on the line. How much more will this politically calculated decision cost Ontario families?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Here we go: the NDP riding the fence again.

I guess the question we have for the NDP on this is, do you support our efforts to ensure that we can provide a better alternative to the people in the southwest GTA or do you not? If you're going to support that, then you need to support the important investments we're making in energy generation that are allowing that flexibility to occur in the system. It's because of the investments we've made, which you continually have been opposing here day after day and, indeed, in your previous question you indicated opposition to—you can't have it both ways. Either you're going to support the important investments we're making to build a stronger energy system that allows us to ensure that we can move forward in the southwest GTA without building this plant, or you don't.

In my view, if they're not going to support those investments, then any future under the NDP would ensure that that plant would go back into Oakville.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are used to paying private companies for energy they don't use. After all, they paid Bruce nuclear \$60 million not to produce any electricity at all.

Suzanne Spence writes this: "We are having such a hard time" keeping "our hydro bill down ... it started

when I got hurt and was unable to work for three months and got behind.”

Will the government tell families like Ms. Spence's how much more they're going to pay as a result of this TransCanada deal?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've been very clear and will continue to be. I guess the NDP want us to build a \$1-billion gas plant in Oakville that we don't need any longer because of the important investments we've made. That would be fiscally irresponsible to do.

We're in discussions with TransCanada right now. Those discussions are going positively. This is a company that indeed has made a great contribution to Ontario's energy sector and will continue to.

The fact of the matter is, the NDP wants to oppose everything. They absolutely stand for nothing. They oppose investing in our aging infrastructure. They oppose the measures we're taking to create jobs and build a clean-energy economy. They oppose the clean, reliable, emission-free nuclear power that we're investing in our system. They oppose the support we're bringing to northern Ontario and they oppose the Samsung agreement that's creating jobs right across this province.

It's easy to oppose everything. I think it's incumbent on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families deserve a straight answer on this question. They deserve a straight answer from their government. There needs to be full disclosure on this TransCanada deal—period. Why won't the government tell already-hard-hit Ontarians how much more they're going to have to pay—to cough up—to get out of this TransCanada deal?

Hon. Brad Duguid: During our deliberations on the long-term plan—and fortunately for all of us, because of the huge investments we've made in building a stronger energy system—we identified the fact that this 950-megawatt gas plant would no longer be required—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's one of the reasons why I say to speak through the Chair, because when you're speaking through the Chair, you're looking at me and then you'll know that I'm standing up.

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Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, please come to order.

Please continue, Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's one of the reasons that we've been able to make this decision. It's a responsible decision. We're no longer going to need that 950-megawatt gas plant in Oakville; we can resolve those challenges through a transmission solution. That's a fiscally responsible thing to do.

We're in discussions with TransCanada now. The member opposite is just going to have to allow those discussions to take place. We'll be happy to share with her the results of those discussions when they're done.

But those discussions are positive and we're confident they'll result in a good solution for everyone.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Acting Premier. During the Toronto Centre by-election, Ontario families paid \$15 million that the McGuinty Liberals handed out to the Grace Hospital. During the Ottawa West–Nepean by-election, Ontario families paid \$500 million that the McGuinty Liberals used to boost the pension benefits fund. Now, in what will be a hotly contested seat in Oakville, Ontario families are on the hook to pay up to \$1 billion so the Premier can backtrack on the power plant that he wanted to build there. So I ask the Acting Premier: Why does the price of seats keep going up?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thank you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm just going to give you 10 seconds to rephrase that question so that one isn't impugning motive.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh, that's a challenge, Mr. Speaker.

What will the next by-election or election seat cost in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted, actually, to take this question because I think it really does point to what the true intentions of the Conservative Party are. This party opposite is prepared to oppose all of those health investments that we have made since 2003. I will be available to remind the public of Ontario—in fact, this particular member opposite was the Minister of Health when those cuts in health care began, and they have already identified for the campaign ahead that they will be taking \$3 billion, at a minimum, out of the health care system.

So I would ask the member opposite: Will you be revoking those extremely good decisions we made about health care investments in this province? Will you be revoking the decisions we made for those investments? That, to me, is the question for the House today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Through the Chair: She's cuckoo. Honest to God.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member will withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw.

Shortly after Ontario families paid \$15 million in Toronto, the Premier appointed the former mayor of Winnipeg to cabinet over dozens of long-serving and loyal Liberals. After Ontario families paid \$500 million, the Premier appointed the former mayor of Ottawa to cabinet over dozens of long-serving and loyal Liberals. So I ask: Now that Ontario families could pay up to \$1 billion for the Premier's backtracking in Oakville, will the member for Oakville become the new Minister of Energy?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's pretty instructive to understand the road we're going down with the com-

ments from an experienced member like this in the Legislature. And quite frankly, I think, even for you, it's a little bit over the top.

Let me just say this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm standing; you should be sitting.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

I just remind members that it's very easy to not speak through the Chair, but it is much easier when you are speaking through me, because it does start to take away some of the personal pointing across at each other. As well, let's not bring things down to a level where—this is three times today I've asked members to withdraw comments that are truly of a personal nature. Let's keep things at the political level, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please don't argue with the Speaker.

If the members desire that the Speaker start to crack down 100% on everything, I'm very happy to do that, and we'll just start turfing people left and right. We're over halfway into a question period right now and it's just dragging and dragging. I think the public who are here and the people watching at home want to see, as I've described before, that cut and thrust of question period. I ask for the support of all members to do that.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. This Wednesday, as a result of an NDP motion passed at committee, the Auditor General will produce a report on consultants' contracts in the health care system.

Ontarians have watched front-line care disappear from their communities: millions of hours of nursing hours cut, emergency rooms shut down, and home care and physiotherapy vanishing. Instead of protecting the interests of Ontarians, this government has allowed these precious dollars to go to lobbyists, consultants or to salary schemes.

Can the Acting Premier explain why her government has supported this culture of entitlement?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to have this question from the member opposite. The reality is that we have had more investment in health care. It has absolutely been a historic level of investment in health care since 2003.

What that has meant is that we have taken a very careful look at how we spend the money so that it results in the hiring of 10,000 nurses, not the firing in the previous years from both the NDP and Conservative governments of the past.

We realize that as we continue to invest in health care—we, as the majority of the members on that very

committee that she mentioned, moved to have the Auditor General review these kinds of expenses. If we see that there is something that needs to be fixed, this, in fact, is the government that steps forward to fix it, not ignore it. That has been the history of the Ontario Liberal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, hospitals use lobbyists and they use consultants because your government is forcing them to work in that way.

The Auditor General will give us a small glimpse into health care consultant use, and let me tell you, you wouldn't believe the number of hoops I had to go through to get this investigation to get that small glimpse. Why is this government refusing to allow the use of accountability and transparency measures that already exist, such as access to freedom of information and Ombudsman oversight of health care agencies?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think that all members of the House will be happy to note that our Minister of Health will be bringing forward items, probably by this Wednesday, to address the things that the Liberal members of this House are concerned about.

I think it's instructive to have a little review of what all members of the House would perhaps see as inappropriate, which would probably include that their own member for Toronto—Danforth was a lobbyist, even after two months of having been elected to this House—a lobbyist in fact on behalf of the Ontario Nurses' Association—or that even in this day, after the member for Hamilton became the leader of the NDP, when she was at city council in Hamilton, she was part of decisions to hire lobbyists to lobby the government.

These are members of the NDP who today stand in the House and suddenly have had some kind of an epiphany. The reality is that the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Accountability in government agencies is something that we all take very seriously, and I know many other members of this House do so as well. Agencies like Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation are large entities with extensive operations that function day to day largely under their own management. As with all large organizations, outside expertise is sometimes needed to add value to a project or to the operation as a whole.

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I think Ontarians want to know that those sorts of practices which exist at these large public corporations are ethical, that they are accountable and that there is openness and transparency. Can the minister confirm that this is the case?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. I made it very clear to all of our energy agen-

cies that our expectation is and always will be that they strive to ensure that our taxpayers and our ratepayers in Ontario are receiving full value for money.

At a time of rising costs, we've directed our energy agencies to freeze management salaries and lower their expectations on potential rate increases, and we've opened them up to freedom of information.

That stands in stark contrast to the Tories, who removed Hydro One from being subject to freedom of information. One can only think that was to hide that healthy retirement fund they were creating for prominent Tory hacks like Mike Harris's campaign chair, Tom Long, who got \$2.3 million to provide insight and leadership techniques. When Tom Long was a partner at Egon Zehnder, they got \$635,000 in contracts. That included an \$83,000 search fee to find a job for Deb Hutton, another Conservative—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: This is quite a list. Back to the Minister of Energy: I recall those headlines seven to 10 years ago highlighting the abuses going on at Hydro One with regard to contracts being given out in questionable circumstances. We know another one of the hangovers from the Tories' mismanagement of the energy system is something that Ontarians see in their hydro bills every month called the debt retirement charge.

There are some in this House who dish out a lot of criticism about investments this government has made to move away from dirty coal to cleaner sources of power. My constituents in Peterborough can appreciate these investments, but something they didn't expect to see in their bills and don't fully understand is the debt retirement charge. Can the minister explain this debt retirement charge in more detail?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is a totally different question. The supplementary had nothing to do with the question.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is for the environment minister. How much did Ontario families pay for Premier McGuinty's greedy eco tax grab in the 20 days before he backtracked on it?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The member opposite will remember that the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, was passed by your government, and under the structure of the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, organizations are created which are completely run by and completely funded by industry. That is the status quo today. So when it comes to programs and any fees associated with that, it was set up by the previous government to ensure that that money was controlled by industry, spent by industry, and that the fees charged were from industry.

We've been very clear that the program that started on July 1 was not practical, it was not understood by the consumers because they did not take the time to explain it to them in advance, nor was it the most cost-effective

solution. That's why we're proud, on this side of the House, to cancel that program. And to be very clear, there will be no new eco fees going forward either.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: People want their money back. The program cost \$5 million and Ontario families paid something like \$1 million until you were caught. Retailers say they handed the money to Stewardship Ontario. Stewardship Ontario says it has no involvement with eco taxes, doesn't govern eco taxes, wants nothing to do with them. Your office says you're not the best person to talk about this.

Even Hansel and Gretel had a plan before they backtracked. Why does refunding the money to Ontario families who overpaid for your eco taxes not matter to you?

Hon. John Wilkinson: As I was saying, there they go again, talking about things which they know, because they created the act, are not true.

Stewardship Ontario and other industry-funded organizations are industry-funded. We've been very clear to retailers: If you have charged your customers fees and you weren't supposed to, you had better refund that money to your customers. We have been extremely clear with our retailers. In most cases, retailers do not pay Stewardship Ontario. It is the stewards. It is the importer or the producers of those materials who pay. So, we're going to be very clear with our retailers: If they have charged consumers improperly, the best thing they can do is to refund.

I want to say that there are large retailers, for example Canadian Tire and Home Depot, who are doing the right thing and are refunding fees that they charged improperly. We want to thank them for doing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: A question for the Minister of the Environment: Does the proposed shipment of radioactive nuclear steam generators to Sweden across Ontario's Great Lakes exceed safe levels set by the International Atomic Energy Agency?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm surprised that a member who came to this place known as an environmentalist would ask that question. He knows that the question, when it comes to the transportation of radioactive material in this province, is the sole purview of the federal government. Perhaps he's had some amnesia since he got to this House, but when it comes to this place we know exactly what our responsibilities are.

I would say to the member that you may want to talk to Mr. Layton who, on your behalf, may be able to raise that question in the federal House, because that's exactly where that question belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, some ministers think that they have responsibility for their portfolios, like the environment, and apparently some don't.

In late September, a spokesperson for the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission stated that the proposed shipment of plutonium and other nuclear waste in those generators exceeds by six times the overall radioactivity limits allowed on a single ship. There is no need to ship this waste thousands of miles. This minister is responsible for protecting the Great Lakes and belongs to the government that is, indeed, the owner of the Bruce nuclear facility. Why is he refusing to stand up to protect the Great Lakes?

Hon. John Wilkinson: This government has a record that we're extremely proud of when it comes to preserving our Great Lakes.

Did the member not just refer to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission? Did he not refer to that? Why? Because, in Canada, when it comes to the regulation of radioactive material, that is a federal responsibility.

We're very clear on this side of the House—we're very clear—that the Great Lakes are a wonderful legacy for our province. We are working every day to make sure that our lakes are as safe as possible. We have, of course, an interest in those things that deal with the federal government. We express our concerns to the federal government, but we do not want to allow the federal government to believe that somehow they can shirk their responsibility for the environment. We will not be apologists for the federal government in this House, and that's exactly why we'll ensure that their responsibilities are theirs. We look forward to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Transportation. Public transit is one of the most important issues to people in my riding of Oakville. Many of my constituents commute daily into downtown Toronto for work and school. This often involves travelling on three different transit systems: Oakville Transit to get to the GO station, the GO train to Union and then the TTC to other parts of Toronto.

Last November, 500 Oakville transit riders were part of a pilot project with the Presto card. My constituents enjoyed the convenience of using one card for Oakville Transit, the GO and the TTC. I'm sure people in the other parts of the GTA would enjoy the convenience of Presto as well. Can the minister provide the House with an update on the progress of the Presto card?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to do that, and I thank the member for the question.

One of the goals of my ministry, being the Minister of Transportation, is to encourage as many people as possible to get out of their cars and get on public transit. I think the Presto card is a very important incentive to help people do that.

In fact, with the Presto card, transit riders can ride seamlessly around the GTA, and I think that's how

people see this region: as a place where they should be able to travel without changing the method of paying a fare.

Fourteen thousand riders have signed on to the Presto card since it came out. Over the summer it was rolled out on the Lakeshore West GO line, Oakville Transit, Burlington Transit and at nine TTC stations. This fall it's going to go live on the Milton and Georgetown GO lines. By March 2011, it will be fully rolled out on all seven GO Transit lines, including buses, and eight municipal transit systems in the GTA.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for the response, Minister. I know that many of my constituents are pleased to see these steps taken to integrate different transit systems in the entire GTA, and it makes their daily commute easier.

I understand, however, that there's been some discussion as to whether the Presto system uses the most advanced technology. Over the summer, I and others in my community read stories in the newspaper that places like New York City, for example, are testing technology that allows riders to tap on to public transit using their own credit cards.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you tell us if and when transit riders in the GTA can expect to have the same convenience?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy to talk about the evolving technology, because that's what it is. Technology is developing very quickly. The Presto system is the first step in bringing that seamless ridership, that seamless convenience of smart cards, to the GTA—the GTHA, in fact. We're developing a complex system of linking these regions together. As I said, 14,000 riders have already signed on to Presto.

We've also begun to develop the next generation of Presto technology, and that's what the member from Oakville is talking about. What will happen is, Presto will be able to accept different types of payments, such as contactless credit cards, debit cards and cellphones.

We know that jurisdictions in other parts of the world are also looking at how to bring open payment to their systems, but it's important to note that those systems are also not yet developed. We'll be working with Presto to go to that next generation of technology.

PHOTO CARDS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: The Photo Card Act, as you know, was passed in November 2008. One of its objectives was to give Ontarians who don't drive access to a government-issued photo card. People with disabilities were especially welcoming of that initiative.

My question to the minister: Two years after that legislation was passed, that card is still not available. Can the minister tell us why?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased that the member opposite has asked this question because it gives

me an opportunity to talk about what we are going to be doing, going forward. I recognize that the legislation has been passed. One of the first meetings that I took as the Minister of Transportation was from some folks from the CNIB who brought this issue to me. I want the member opposite to know that we are working.

It's very important to note that there are a number of options possible. There are some very complex smart cards that would have more than just basic ID available on the card. Then there's the option that's available in other jurisdictions, where it's simply a driver's licence for non-drivers that has that basic ID on it.

We're looking at how we might move forward. I know it's very, very important to people with disabilities. It's also important to the senior population. When people stop driving, they need that ID card. I hope we'll be able to bring an announcement forward soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Perhaps the minister could infuse some urgency into this matter; it's been two years.

Here's what my constituent Kathryn wrote: "When I phoned the Ontario government information line, they had no information about the card at all and had not heard that it was going to be available, so this doesn't leave me feeling very hopeful."

What can the minister tell us that will give Kathryn some hope that this card will in fact be made available? Or is this another Liberal, McGuinty backtrack?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, I have been meeting with the folks from the CNIB in particular. There's a coalition of groups who are interested in this card, and they are advising us. We want to do it right. If we were to rush into something and create a card that didn't work, that had privacy concerns, that cost more than it should have, then we would be open to attacks from the opposite side.

What we want to do is make sure that we provide an option for people who are not eligible to get a driver's licence. We are working on that, and I look forward to giving the member opposite and, more importantly, the people of Ontario news on that in the near future.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. I've heard from thousands of Ontarians worried about making ends meet. One of the saddest stories comes from Windsor, where Don Lefave writes this: "The HST added to my hydro bill and the upcoming smart meter will force me to make decisions that I never would have dreamed I would have to make in my 78 years ... I am a retired auto worker and suffer with chronic breathing difficulties which forces me to run my electric oxygen pump 24/7 ... We COPD patients cannot regulate our times of breathing and will be forced to pay the high (smart meter) rates due to our conditions. Where will we find the money?"

Mr. Lefave asks a good question. Can the minister tell him where he will find the money?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me just say I appreciate hearing from someone in Windsor who might be concerned about hydro bills and bills in general because we are very concerned about our seniors. This is exactly why the Minister of Finance attended, in Windsor, the launch of both the electricity and the property tax credit. This is exactly the kind of initiative that is meant to help our seniors make ends meet.

We recognize that over time prices do go up. We also recognize what we've had to do with the electricity sector in building new energy, something that, frankly, had been avoided for over two decades in Ontario. But we have made a number of initiatives available for families who need help.

Let me remind both the residents in Windsor, my own hometown, and people across Ontario to watch the record very closely in terms of what the other parties have done with every initiative that we have brought forward to help Ontario families. They—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Lefave isn't alone. Many other Windsorites are hurting. Bozena Wojnarowicz writes this: "I lost my job. I am 54 years old ... So far, no prospects in Windsor. The HST is one more hole in my wallet. Now we're reduced to one step closer to thrift shops, food banks or soup kitchens."

John Marcotte adds: "It seems every time we do something to reduce our hydro consumption ... the hydro rate doubles ... Rate increases, the HST, guaranteed profits for utilities, time-of-use rates will make our bill go up so high that we will probably end up losing our home."

Will this minister continue to ignore people like Mr. Lefave, Ms. Wojnarowicz and Mr. Marcotte, or will she support giving them a real break by taking the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I want to be certain that every member of the House understands the number of initiatives that this government has brought forth to help Ontario families with their everyday costs. The reality has been that the opposition parties, including the NDP, have opposed every one of these initiatives.

In my hometown was one of the greatest take-ups for the Second Career program for exactly an individual that you might mention in this House, who, at mid-career, needs to change careers because jobs were disappearing during the height of the crisis. That Second Career program was so successful, especially for hard-hit cities like Windsor. The NDP opposed these very initiatives meant to help people.

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At the same breath, when we wanted to help families at low income, when we introduced the family child tax credit, the NDP opposed these initiatives that today are giving those families \$1,100 of assistance every month. Let's be clear: We are here to help Ontario families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, one of the biggest consumer complaints I get at my office has to do with energy retailers, particularly the sometimes shady practices applied by their salespeople to peddle expensive energy contracts to consumers that can be next to impossible to get out of. Common complaints include excessive consultation fees, not being made fully aware of the whole cost and terms of the contract, and not clearly knowing what they can really expect to pay compared to choosing service from their local distribution company.

Minister, can you tell me, my constituents and the people of Ontario what you are doing to protect the vulnerable customers who are paying a big price for those retailers?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is one member who has constantly stood up for the vulnerable in his community and, indeed, for vulnerable consumers. I want to thank him for his advocacy on this.

Yes, indeed, assistance is on the way, but we've got to think back: When the market originally opened to energy retailers in 2002, the Tory government failed to put in place measures to protect the public from potential abuse from some members of the retailer industry. This past spring, the Legislature passed the Energy Consumer Protection Act, and just last week regulations were announced that are going to address many of the concerns the Ontario Energy Board hears from consumers when it comes to this industry.

Beginning January 1, energy retailers will be required to disclose exactly how the contract price they're offering compares to the price offered by the local utility. Consumers will be able to cancel their contracts without financial penalty in many circumstances, and in other circumstances cancellation fees will be capped and lowered.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: There is no question that these regulations will have a positive impact on the way energy is being delivered across our province.

My supplementary is also for the Minister of Energy. Minister, since our government announced its intention to put in place regulations to better protect Ontario families from unscrupulous energy retailers, I have heard many positive comments from constituents in my riding. That said, I have also heard from several constituents on a matter pertaining to one of the new regulations. As of January 1, 2011, suite meters will be mandatory in all newly constructed units in the province of Ontario.

With all the fearmongering going on in this House, many people are confused about how this smart meter will impact their lives and the cost of energy. Can the minister tell me how we can protect our consumers and our customers?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I'm going to give you 10 seconds to bring that into how it related to the first question, and—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We are talking about consumer protections, and as you know, Mr. Speaker, when the retailers come and sell to people about many different costs, those smart meters will help protect the consumer. That's why I'm asking the Minister of Energy to tell us what's going on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm referring this to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question and thank the member for his incredible dedication to promoting a greener Ontario. This is what our government is all about: It's about committing to building a stronger, greener economy; protecting the environment; protecting the consumer. Suite meters are one tool towards doing that.

It is important to note that while suite meters will be mandatory in all newly constructed units, in existing units landlords will have the option of installing them and existing tenants will always have the option of saying either yes or no. Resident tenants who decide to take part in the suite metering program will see reductions in their monthly rents.

All this aside, suite meters are an important tool, and I encourage tenants and landlords to work together to help Ontario reduce its energy use.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Acting Premier. This provincial government's Second Career program is rife with problems. Recently in this House, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities lauded the program's success based on the number of people using it. I noticed that the minister didn't comment on how many people actually get a job out of it.

My constituent Mike Seeley, a father of four, remains in exactly the same financial situation as he was when he qualified for the Second Career program. Will the Acting Premier explain to him why upon entering the second year of his paralegal program, his living allowance is cut off?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: We appreciate the question about one of the most historic programs that a government has ever brought in in response to a serious world recession, which affected Ontario, frankly, more than any province in Canada. In particular, in areas in Ontario where manufacturing jobs were lost, those really were—people working in these sectors were particularly hard hit. That \$355 million is a historic amount to pour into a brand new program called Second Career.

To this particular case, we're happy to look at this particular individual. We wouldn't have that kind of data here to respond to that. But overall, these are individuals who have to make a hard choice mid-career, in their 40s or 50 years old, where they've already gone to school, they already have 20 years in one particular location with an employer. It is a monumental decision and our government stepped forward to help these folks with the

kinds of expenses that ordinarily, younger students wouldn't have to incur. It was an important program—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: With that response, I can understand why there was reference made to her diminished intellect earlier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Whether it's HST, microFIT or eco taxes, this government fails time after time to consider the real people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Please continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Whether it's HST, microFIT or eco taxes, this government fails time after time to consider the real people they affect with their decisions. My office has received numerous complaints from people in this program. They say that your ministry qualified them for financial assistance at the start of the program only to have that assistance yanked out from underneath them partway through their studies.

Perhaps the Acting Premier can answer a general question: Why are you promising down-and-out workers a second chance and then stealing their financial assistance from them?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm just going to ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: We're just getting a real sense about how this next campaign is going to go, and if you think that's going to put us off, you've got another thing coming, because we'll be ready. We will be ready for you, my friend.

The reality is, I'll be heading down to that particular member's riding and I will say, "Here's an individual who opposed the program to give these folks a second chance at a career." They opposed the opportunity to retrain workers who knew they wouldn't be able to get a job back in that same sector; that they needed to develop new skills—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm a little disappointed as to the tone within the Legislature today. Yes, I too, like everyone else, recognize that there is an election taking place in a year. But at the same time, this is a place where one can ask questions and answer questions. It is a place for debating. The debate is healthy and it's a part of our democratic process.

Bringing things down to a personal level—personal attacks on one another—is not helpful for any of us and, quite honestly, brings down the level of all of the good things that this chamber is supposed to do.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need the member from Durham commenting to me. I can read the newspaper clippings every day. I would appreciate it, though, when the Speaker is speaking, if you would listen to what the Speaker has to say.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Hamilton's community care access centre is facing \$12 million in cuts. These cuts will effectively grind the home care and long-term-care systems to a halt and force our hospitals into a tailspin. These cuts mean that seniors will be forced to take up hospital beds, to go without adequate bathing services or stay indefinitely on home care waiting lists. Vulnerable seniors and their families are begging—begging—you to address the funding shortfall before a disaster occurs.

Does this government have a thought, let alone a plan, for preventing this catastrophe?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I hate to return to the old theme, but the reality is that every step we have taken to reinvest in health care—and especially health care in Hamilton, which is a beacon, frankly, for health care in the world, with terrific facilities there; let's say that first—all of these measures of significant investment were opposed by the members of the NDP. That's pretty hard to believe, considering that Hamilton, a significant part of Ontario, like the rest of Ontario, when we began in 2003, was suffering the same ills of hospital cutbacks, nurses being fired, CCAC services and home care not being provided. When we poured hundreds of millions of dollars into these sectors, every one of those measures was opposed by the NDP.

When it comes time, we will be back to the people of Hamilton, as the good representatives from Hamilton are today, to tell them that those great institutions offering services to their community can do so because of the infusion of funding—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, we're on the spin cycle, I see.

The minister-announced funding is less than half of what is needed now and less than a quarter of the projected funds needed. The fact is it's not keeping pace with our seniors' needs in Hamilton. Ensuring a robust system is essential to the well-being of our seniors and the entire health system, yet the government is prepared to stand back as the CCAC services in Hamilton are gutted.

Will this government stop the shell game and actually address the root problem and funding shortfalls in Hamilton now?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that since 2003 there has been a huge increase, not just in money but in services being delivered in the Hamilton area and through home care services through CCACs.

Since 2003, over 182,000 more clients are being served in this area. It's important to note that 600,000 of them today are receiving services. This is a phenomenal number, far more than was ever the case.

It's true that we have to continually improve to respond to the needs in that community. That is why, since 2003, there has been a 73% increase in funding for that CCAC—again, something the NDP have opposed.

It's hard to receive a question about an issue when it's the very party that opposed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S CHILD

Hon. Gerry Phillips: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is a point of order I think all members might agree on, and that's to congratulate our fellow colleague John Milloy and his wife, Sara, on the birth of a son over the weekend. That's a happy occasion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to rise to recognize and celebrate with the MS Society, who are here at Queen's Park today. It's my privilege to welcome—and I did, earlier today—Mike Roche, who's from the Durham region group for MS; John Daley, who's a member at large; Jim Marsh, who was unable to attend, but is a volunteer who works very hard; and William Krueger, who's the coordinator for the Bowmanville MS Walk.

Every day, three or more people are diagnosed with MS in Canada, but thanks to the work of the MS Society, we will find a cure. But finding a cure costs money. I encourage all members to support their local MS chapter.

I'd like to congratulate Katharine McMurdo, who raised \$5,200 in the Bowmanville walk, as well as Ben Schell, who raised over \$4,500 from the walk in Uxbridge. Katharine and Ben were two of the top 100 fundraisers in Ontario this year.

Congratulations to all who have shown outstanding community spirit as individuals, families and businesses work together to support MS research.

Remember: Every step taken and every dollar raised brings us closer to a cure.

On a personal note, on Sunday I attended the Blackstock Recreational Centre, where I was very impressed. There was hardly room to breathe in the room, it was so closely packed. The event was to raise funds for Margo Larmer and her husband, Craig, to make a trip to Costa Rica. This family, the Larmer family, is a highly respected agricultural family. Their father, Glen, and Margo's father, Gary MacGregor, came all the way from Sarnia to

help mark this very special occasion. I wish them well on their trip to Costa Rica.

The hope is that the liberation therapy from Dr. Zamboni will find part of a cure for MS. I'm sure everyone in this House will join with me in celebrating the work that the MS Society has done to make us aware of a disease that affects individuals and all those people around them.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Phil McNeely: Our government believes in preserving our environment while making positive choices for Ontario's economy, and so we are making investments that will benefit Ontarians for generations to come. Our commitment to exploring and investing in green energy is creating 50,000 jobs in this province that will help Ontario families.

We are working hard to attract new investment in renewable energy to create well-paying green jobs, to make Ontario a world leader in clean energy, and all the while creating a culture of conservation in this province. Our feed-in tariff program will not only provide 20,000 jobs and create 2,500 megawatts of power, but it also creates a stable investment climate by providing guaranteed incentives to wind, water, solar, biomass and biogas developers.

Our plan is producing tangible results in Ontario communities. In Guelph, 500 jobs will come from the Canadian Solar manufacturing facility; 900 direct and indirect jobs will come from Siemens turbine blade manufacturing plant; in Oakville, we'll see 200 jobs at the new Solar Semiconductor manufacturing facility; 800 jobs are coming from the Lower Mattagami hydroelectric project; and in Niagara region, the Niagara tunnel hydroelectric project is providing 230 jobs.

It is disappointing that the opposition have taken a position against investments that will create jobs and bring many new manufacturing facilities to Ontario. By investing in clean energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

NATIONAL FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: On behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I rise to recognize this week as National Foster Family Week. I'd like to acknowledge the tremendous commitment that foster families make to vulnerable children in Ontario.

Children's aid societies have done an excellent job in acknowledging the important and sometimes difficult job that foster families have. Just this past week, the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society recognized Linda Barkey as foster parent of the year. Throughout Linda's 11 years as a foster parent, she has taken many children into her home and made their health and development a priority.

The children's aid society of Algoma, Algoma Family Services, Community Living Algoma and Nog-da-win-

da-min Family and Community Services recognized foster family week by hosting an art exhibit. This exhibit featured the artistic talent of local foster children with the theme: "Why my foster family is important to me." These are just a couple of examples of how foster families are being acknowledged across the province.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the Foster Parents Society of Ontario, who provide training and support for over 8,000 foster families.

We must remember that foster families dedicate their lives to allow vulnerable children in Ontario to live in a safe, healthy and caring home. Our communities have been strengthened because of these remarkable citizens. I thank and applaud them for their efforts.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have in my hand a memo dated October 4, 2010, from the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant community care access centre to patient care vice-presidents at the hospitals within that huge LHIN jurisdiction, advising them that as of October 18, 2010—today—"it will be necessary to wait-list new CCAC clients with care plans requiring a high level of service. These are individuals who are eligible for discharge from hospital and require greater than 60 hours of personal support services per month." It's the estimate of this CCAC that will amount to 150 clients a month.

You understand what this means is that people who are treated, recovering, eligible to go home, who require not 60 hours a week but 60 hours a month—less than 15 hours a week; approximately two hours a day of support—are going to be kept in hospital rooms at an expense far beyond what it will take to assist these people to the tune of around two hours a day in their own home. This is nuts. It's nuts and it's cruel, because these people in the hospital are going to become re-infected. They're going to become demoralized. They're going to fail as the hospitals are understaffed and don't have people to assist them with mobility, in moving about and about and around, with bathing and other fundamental daily needs that add to dignity.

This government, the Liberal McGuintys, is forcing sick people to stay in expensive hospitals rather than returning to their own homes at the cost of a mere two hours a day of CCAC care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

EVENTS IN OTTAWA CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take this opportunity to celebrate the beautiful new architecture and public art that has been displayed in my riding of Ottawa Centre as of last week.

Last week, we had the great opportunity of unveiling the Chinatown gateway on Somerset Street in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. This is a beautiful royal arch which has been built, perhaps for the last time, outside China. We had collaboration from the federal govern-

ment, from the provincial government, from the local municipality of Ottawa and from the Chinese government for this beautiful arch.

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I want to thank the Chinatown gateway project committee—Peter Yeung, Larry Lee and many other members like Katie Ng—for making this project happen, and also the Somerset Street Chinatown BIA—Grace Xin was a huge proponent—and the Dalhousie Community Association. I want to mention Eric Darwin for his contribution.

Also what we have seen in Ottawa Centre is beautiful public art being displayed on Preston Street. These are called Postcards from the Piazzas. It's by local artist c.j. fleury and it's installed along Preston Street. Big congratulations to Lori Mellor, who's the executive director of the Preston Street BIA, for that contribution.

Also, the Wellington Marbles have been installed on Wellington Street West in Ottawa Centre by artists Marcus Kucey-Jones and Ryan Lotecki. Again, congratulations to Pat O'Brien of the Hintonburg Community Association, Jason Thomson of the Wellington Village Community Association and the Wellington West BIA as well, through Annie Hillis.

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: On behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to recognize this week as Small Business Week across Canada. It is a time when we honour small businesses and their vital contributions to the economy of Canada and Ontario.

The CFIB reports that small businesses with less than 50 staff represent almost 98% of businesses and employ 31% of all workers in Canada. Small businesses also represent more than 30% of Canada's exports—of prime importance to a trading nation such as ours.

Small business owners work long hours to ensure their companies succeed, yet they receive little in the way of support from the Ontario government. The priorities of this government when it comes to business are to tax and to regulate. Ontario businesses are drowning in red tape, and the Ontario government has made minimal efforts to cut red tape. Contrast this with the Liberal government of British Columbia, which has eliminated more than 40% of regulations in its time in office.

So let's honour our small businesses and their contributions this week, but understand that Ontario's government has to start seeing itself as a friend and helper of small business. Business leaders can succeed; they just need the government to stop putting roadblocks in their way.

McKELLAR PLACE

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week, I was part of another terrific announcement in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. Our government provided \$1.8 million of financial assistance towards a \$10-million construction

project that will renovate the old McKellar hospital building.

The hospital building, owned by Habib Enterprises, has been converted into the new McKellar Place: 100 units for seniors' retirement living as well as 35,000 square feet of office space. When fully occupied, this building will create 35 new full-time jobs, and that's in addition to the construction jobs that were associated with the project.

It's always exciting when we see the private sector investing in Thunder Bay. We're very pleased to partner with Mr. Habib, owner and president of Habib Enterprises, who stepped up and made this project happen. With the revitalization of this site and the soon-to-begin new consolidated courthouse, the downtown south core is receiving a significant shot in the arm.

As I mentioned, once occupied, this project will create 35 new full-time jobs. That's in addition to the 340 men and women who recently were called back to the Terrace Bay mill, the 200 or so back to work at the Lac des Iles mine and another 200 to 400 soon to be hired at the local Bombardier plant, in addition to the hundreds already brought back. The list goes on.

The world is slowly emerging from the greatest recession since the Great Depression. There's more work to be done, but we are seeing important signs of progress. I want to thank Mr. Habib for his faith in Thunder Bay and its economic future, for helping to preserve part of our architectural heritage and for partnering with our government on this project.

SMART METERS

Mr. Rick Johnson: Our government is working hard to protect our environment by upgrading our energy system and introducing initiatives for producing clean energy while fostering a culture of conservation. The opposition, on the other hand, were content to let the old, broken energy system fall into disrepair because they did not want to make the investments that would have helped bring our system up to date.

While we are committed to bringing the energy system into the 21st century, the proposals put forward by the opposition leader would drag our province backwards. Forcing local distribution companies to provide two parallel infrastructures—one, time-of-use, and the second, optional traditional meter—would result in substantial cost increases. The Leader of the Opposition says he wants our energy system to be more like Florida's. Well, it turns out the flat price per kilowatt hour in Florida is 12.6 cents, while Ontario's highest time-of-use rate is 9.9 cents. That's almost one third higher. Our lowest rate is 5.3 cents between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m.

According to a recent Toronto Star article, the spokesman for the Florida distribution company said that most of the customers who choose time-of-use over the flat rate save 10% to 15% annually and are saving energy 87% of the time.

The Leader of the Opposition suggests that Ontario cannot afford the investment that we've been making to

update and renew our energy system. However, it is clear that what is unaffordable for Ontarians is the energy system proposed by the opposition.

JEAN LUMB

Mr. Reza Moridi: It was my honour to have been invited to attend the annual Jean Lumb Foundation Awards.

I was truly amazed to learn about Jean Bessie Lumb, who was a pioneer in so many ways: as the first Chinese-Canadian woman restaurateur, chair of the Save Chinatown Campaign, board member of Mount Sinai Hospital and recipient of the Order of Canada. Over her many years of dedication and service to the Chinese-Canadian community, Jean Lumb received many awards, far too many to list here today. That's quite an accomplishment.

Her impact on her community continues today with the establishment of the Jean Lumb Foundation. This not-for-profit organization was established to advance education by providing scholarships to high school students of Chinese heritage. Over the past 13 years, many accomplished students have received scholarships from her foundation. In order to receive a Jean Lumb Foundation scholarship, a student must have excelled in four areas: academics, athletics, the arts and community services.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the board of directors of the Jean Lumb Foundation, Arlene Chan, Stephen Wong and Greg K. W. Wong, for their dedication to continuing the legacy of Jean Lumb.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH AND PERSONS DAY

MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES FEMMES ET JOURNÉE DE L'AFFAIRE « PERSONNE »

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise to acknowledge October as Women's History Month in Ontario.

Je prends la parole pour souligner qu'octobre est le Mois de l'histoire des femmes en Ontario. Nous célébrons, ce mois-ci, les contributions exceptionnelles des femmes dans tous les domaines de leur vie au sein de la société. Et nous célébrons aujourd'hui, le 18 octobre, la Journée de l'affaire « personne », qui représente un tournant d'une importance fondamentale dans l'histoire canadienne pour toutes les femmes du Canada.

This month, we celebrate the extraordinary contributions of women in all areas of their life and society, and on this day, October 18, we celebrate Persons Day, which represents a critically important milestone in Canadian history for all women in Canada.

Thanks to the determination and courage of five women—Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards,

Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Nellie McClung—on October 18, 1929, women in Canada were declared persons under the law. This resounding victory for equality allowed women to participate fully in politics and affairs of state.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of the landmark report *The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*. This report laid the groundwork for fundamental changes in women's rights, including maternity leave options and the abolishment of gender-based minimum wage. It promoted "equality in practice as well as in principle." And it set out a vision for being a woman in Canada, stating, "Girls and women must be encouraged to seek self-fulfillment as human beings rather than merely as females. Each female should be encouraged to discover her own particular gifts, talents, drives, and to cultivate them for self-expression and for contribution to society."

Clearly, women have made progress since 1929, but we still have a long way to go. Recent media attention to these issues highlights the challenge before us. According to a recent report in the *Globe and Mail*, within Canada's top 500 private and public sector companies, only 17% of corporate officers and 13% of corporate directors are women. Further, women represent only 37% of mid-level managers, yet women represent nearly half of the workforce.

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According to the 2006 census, women working full-time, year-round in Ontario earned 71% of what men employed full-time, year-round earned that year.

Le Mois de l'histoire des femmes nous rappelle qu'il faut continuer de défier le statu quo, pour que nous puissions préparer le terrain pour les femmes aujourd'hui et pour les femmes de demain. Nous devons continuer à battre le rappel pour l'égalité et nous devons continuer à bâtir un avenir meilleur pour les femmes dans notre province.

During Women's History Month, we are reminded that we must continue to challenge the status quo so that we can clear the path for women today and the women of tomorrow. We must continue to lead the march toward equality. We must continue to build a better future for women in our province.

NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE DE LA SÉCURITÉ SCOLAIRE

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I rise in the House today to mark the beginning of National School Safety Week. There are nearly two million students in Ontario's 4,900 publicly funded schools, and each of them deserves a safe and positive learning environment. In fact, such an environment is essential to their success.

À vrai dire, un tel environnement est essentiel à leur réussite. Peu de choses sont plus importantes que la santé, la sécurité et le bien-être de nos jeunes.

Students must feel safe and welcome at school so they can focus on learning. School staff must also feel safe and welcome so they can focus on supporting student achievement. In fact, everyone—staff, students, parents and the community—should feel safe, welcome and respected in Ontario's schools.

National School Safety Week is an opportunity to raise awareness about cyberbullying, harassment and other school safety issues. We must work together to keep schools positive and safe places to learn.

That is why we encourage students, teachers, parents and principals to use this week as a forum for having a serious discussion about safety in our schools. An open and honest dialogue is the first step toward prevention and awareness.

Since 2004, we have invested over \$230 million into safe schools initiatives that support a positive school climate. We created a safe schools action team and responded to their recommendations. From this year, all boards are expected to have a policy on equity and inclusiveness and a guideline on religious accommodation to ensure all members of the school community are welcomed and respected.

Working with our partners at the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, we developed software that teaches safe Internet practices and distributed that information to our schools.

We established strong partnerships with organizations such as the Kids' Internet Safety Alliance, Kids Help Phone, and Egale Canada.

The Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, which came into effect on February 1 of this year, requires all board employees to report serious student incidents to the principal, and it requires principals to contact parents of all victims. It also requires school staff who are directly involved with students to respond to inappropriate and disrespectful student behaviour.

Our safe schools strategy includes strong consequences for students who act inappropriately, but also programs for those students to earn their way back into the classroom and complete their education. Also, in November we will recognize Bullying Awareness Week. But investments, partnerships, policies and legislation do not have the power of an honest conversation. Whether it is a parent with their child, students speaking with other students, a student with their teacher, or a teacher with their principal, I strongly encourage all members of the education community to use National School Safety Week as a platform for an honest exchange about anything that affects safety in our schools.

National School Safety Week may only last seven days, but promoting a safe and supportive learning environment should continue throughout the year. National School Safety Week provides us with an important opportunity to promote safe schools as an essential element to student success.

I do want to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the education community for their very hard work and their dedication to making our schools safe places to be.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Hon. John Wilkinson: Today is the start of Waste Reduction week. Around the world, and here in Ontario, we create a lot of waste. Each of us in this province is responsible for about a tonne of waste each and every year.

Now we all know about the three Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—but how often do we stop and think about what that really means, particularly when it comes to the first and most important principle: reducing the amount of waste we generate in the first place?

Here, at the beginning of the 21st century, we need to ask ourselves: How do we build a more sustainable way of life in this province? How do we reduce the impact we are having on this earth and make sure we don't leave a mess for our kids and grandkids to deal with?

We have to stop thinking that we can easily dispose of things we no longer need or want without considering the consequences, without thinking about how our actions will ultimately affect our environment—the water we drink, the air we breathe and the land we grow our food upon. Instead, we need to focus on what we can do to reduce our waste, reuse what we can and recycle what is left over. That means truly embracing the concept of sustainability. It means supporting a way of life that is restorative and healthy.

When we look at how to build sustainability into our actions, we can ensure the demands placed upon our environment can be met without reducing the capacity of our planet to provide for future generations. That is just fair. We know people in Ontario want to do the right thing. They want to do the fair thing. So we are helping people to do their part; for example, through the blue box program. This program plan surpassed its 60% overall diversion target in 2006, two years ahead of the required date. Almost one million tonnes of waste is diverted through the blue box program each and every year.

We're also committed to increasing waste diversion by introducing more programs for household hazardous waste like paints and solvents. Ontarians can now divert 44 different electronic items like MP3 players, cameras, phones, computers and radios. We also introduced a program to divert and recycle the nine million used tires we generate each year in this province. Last year we recycled some 91,000 tonnes of tires, creating new products and, in the process, creating green jobs, all reducing the carbon footprint upon our Mother Earth.

We want to provide Ontarians with better information on how to reduce waste. Some of these actions are simple things such as composting as much as we can, buying products we will use up entirely, packing waste-free lunches and carrying our own refillable water bottles and coffee mugs.

I just have come back from St. Michael Catholic School, on The Esplanade, an elementary school here in downtown Toronto. They are celebrating Waste Reduction Week by taking the littlest lunch challenge, where the children are learning how to bring a lunch where there is no waste. And I found quite interesting—

I'm sure the other members would—that if children throw out leftover food and materials that could have been recycled, that actually adds up to 66 pounds—30 kilograms. So every year our children, if they don't learn this new lesson, are throwing out the equivalent of the weight of a grade 2. It didn't take too long for the grade 5s I met with today at the home of the Angels to understand there is a part that they can play to make sure we are reducing the waste that we generate.

We can also use our power as consumers to let producers and manufacturers know that we want fewer hazardous toxic materials, less packaging and more recyclable materials.

We're all committed to waste diversion and reduction here in this province. So, here at the beginning of Waste Reduction Week, let's all take the time to do more at home, at work, at school and at our businesses, including this very place where we work. Working together, we can all make a difference and make our province cleaner and healthier for our kids and our grandkids to enjoy.

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH AND PERSONS DAY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to take this opportunity to recognize the leadership, accomplishments and contributions of women past and present who have made a difference in our communities. We congratulate and thank these women who opened doors for all those who followed and who serve as role models for women and girls throughout this province and country.

The theme of this year's Women's History Month is Canadian Women in Business. As women continue to make up a growing majority of university graduates, they are staking out a place for themselves in the world of business; 37% of mid-level managers in Canada's top 500 private and public sector companies are now women.

There is, however, still room for women to make even further progress in business and to achieve greater representation at the senior levels of power. Today, only 17% of corporate officers and 13% of directors at Canada's top 500 companies are women. The laudable successes of women such as Annette Verschuren, president of Home Depot Canada, or Sheelagh Whittaker, director at Imperial Oil and Standard Life, seem to be the exception rather than the rule. This must change.

This month, I encourage Ontarians to reflect on the important contributions of women and to consider the progress that still needs to be made.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Mr. Toby Barrett: Welcome again to Waste Reduction Week or, as it's known on this side of the House, Failed Expectations Week. Nowhere has there been so much boasted, so much promised and so little achieved.

Here's the report card: Mr. McGuinty promised 60% waste diversion by 2008—failure. You divert only 22%, and that's two years after your original target date.

Taxpayers paid for Ontario Electronic Stewardship to collect 42,000 tonnes of toxin-laced equipment. You failed again. Taxpayers paid the full fare while the program recycled only a third of its promise.

Government promised a new waste diversion act by the end of the spring session—nothing.

The government's eco fee boondoggle has done irreparable damage to words like "eco" and "sustainability." It's really unfortunate for those who consider ourselves conservationists and environmentalists.

Ontario needs action, not words. We need action on waste reduction, and this government, regrettably, has failed to deliver.

NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY WEEK

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Canada Safety Council has designated the week of October 17-23 as National School Safety Week. The focus of this year's week is bullying. We must, in our schools, work to deter and prevent it.

Unfortunately, our students do not all feel safe in our schools today. Bullying has long been an issue of great concern to me and our caucus. Last February, I introduced a motion in the House which was unanimously passed to officially and permanently establish the third week of November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. My motion did state that cyberbullying is never acceptable.

Schoolyard bullying used to conclude at the end of the school day. Now, with the advent and ever-increasing prevalence of online and social media, it has the means to continue unremittingly throughout the 24 hours of any day. Bullies are now capable of always relentlessly tormenting their victims around the clock.

Cyberbullying allows students, many of whom may not be inclined to bully in person, the ability to do so behind the veil of a computer and even anonymity.

This is an extremely serious issue. We know that there are situations now where students actually end up committing suicide because they cannot escape from the Internet, so cyberbullying is driving them to those desperate measures.

It is extremely important that we in the province of Ontario equip our teachers and educate our parents and our students in order that they can respond and deal with cyberbullying.

There is much more that we need to do. National School Safety Week is a time for us to reflect on the status of the measures that have been introduced and to do even more to eliminate and deter bullying. We can and we must protect our children and make our schools safer.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH AND PERSONS DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm responding regarding Women's History Month and Persons Day.

I always start out, speaking to women's groups, by telling them that I'm the first woman in my family to be considered a human person under law. My mother wasn't. My grandmother wasn't. Then they ask, "Where was your mother born and where was your grandmother born?" and I say, "Right here in Canada." That's a sad legacy that was luckily overturned by the work of some incredible women in our past, but we can't stop there.

Certainly, we need to do more in this House. I have before the House a motion for an all-women's committee, non-partisan, that will look at issues of things like the fact that women make 71 cents on every dollar that men make; the fact we have no daycare in this province; that only one in 10 children have a space and that it costs over \$1,000 a month, whereas our neighbours, Manitoba and Quebec, on either side have accessible and affordable daycare.

We need to look, all parties together, as an all-women's all-party committee, at issues like violence against women—one in four women will be attacked in their lifetime—and yet, the absolute partisan myopia of the McGuinty government prevents that even from happening. Can you imagine? They will not even allow an all-party, all-women committee to look at issues that have to do with women. Now, how progressive is that?

Sadly, women are the worse for it. Sadly, women will suffer: yet another generation without adequate daycare, without making the same money as men and being violated, unless this government does something rather than just talk about it.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the matter of Waste Reduction Week, waste diversion week and the bungling of this government with regard to eco fees.

I'll tell you that the performance of the government in putting forward a program that they had not properly analyzed, that they should have understood would simply put the cost of waste on the backs of consumers instead of putting it on the backs of the producers, damaged the whole concept of waste diversion and extended producer responsibility. Today, the minister said he was proud to have cancelled the program. He didn't mention that, in fact, it was his government, Premier McGuinty, who brought that program in in the first place.

The electronic waste reduction program is not doing what people in this province need to have done. According to Jo-Anne St. Godard, executive director of the Recycling Council of Ontario, Ontario has a high concentration of businesses and large institutions but its recycling efforts are aimed at the residential sector. Ms. St. Godard says that huge volumes of toxic e-waste that

isn't collected through government-set-up systems end up in local landfills.

The minister was correct in saying that we have to think about our children and future generations. I say to the Premier that he has to start doing that today.

NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "National School Safety Week provides us with an important opportunity to promote safe schools as an essential element to student success." New Democrats agree with that. The goal of our schools is to provide places of learning and growth, to provide environments that nurture creativity and critical thinking and to teach skills and knowledge that equip these young people for future possibilities.

And while the government introduced Bill 157, which is somewhat good because it establishes a protocol for reporting incidents—while that is good, to report the incident is not enough, because it doesn't prevent the problems in the first place and it doesn't help the victim of bullying or any other form of intimidation.

We've got to be able to move quickly on the recommendations that have been made by Mr. Falconer many years ago. Mr. Falconer proposes many things that teachers and boards and principals need. They "should hire 20 ... full-time social workers," he argues, and I agree.

"The panel recommends that the 20 new full-time social workers dedicated to high-priority schools should not be assigned to more than two schools each," and I agree with that.

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The panel recommends that the 20 additional youth counsellors dedicated to high-priority schools should not be—I already said that, and we agree.

We also believe that the government should follow its own recommendations, where they say that every school authority must have contact lists of community agencies and organizations that have professional expertise and knowledge in the areas of gender-based violence, homophobia and sexual harassment. Teachers need that support and that expertise that comes from those organizations.

If only we listened to the report and if only we listened to Mr. Falconer, we would go a long way to solving some of these problems.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition, one of hundreds I've received from my constituents in Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to one of the new pages, Bridget.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition here to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more and will affix my signature hereto and give this to Anika to be delivered.

MOBILE HOMES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I present this petition on behalf of 240 of my constituents in the St. Clair Community Estates mobile home park in Chatham.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 165 of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, permits a landlord to increase the monthly rent fee for a site in a mobile home park by \$50 per month each time a mobile home unit is sold and the mobile home purchaser enters into a tenancy agreement with the landlord;

"We, the undersigned, as concerned citizens of Ontario and owners of mobile homes in an Ontario mobile home park, urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act now to amend section 165 of RTA 2006 as follows, by adding,

"Further, where following the sale of a mobile home unit in a mobile home park, the subsequent tenancy agreement with the landlord, inclusive of the application of section 165 of RTA 2006 for the purchaser's mobile home unit monthly site rent, any resulting monthly site rent increase shall be capped at an amount that does not exceed the average monthly site rent of all mobile home units in that mobile home park."

I agree with this petition and I sign my name to it as well.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care" at the "Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and community safety minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution

tabled at Queen's Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature ... call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I affix my name in support.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

M^{me} France Gélinas: This petition was given to me by Mrs. Rona Ramsey, the most energetic woman in my riding. Her daughter, Laurel Ireland, is in the west members' gallery right now. It reads as follows:

"Funding and Approval for CCSVI Diagnosis and Treatment

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck ... cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario;

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and"—most recently—"the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s;

"Whereas not all people diagnosed with MS" have been found to have CCSVI, "and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues;

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario province still has not ... approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

I support this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the clerks with page Jayden.

VETERANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce a number of petitions—there are over 1,400, in fact—given to me by

Mrs. Wilma McNeill, a tireless advocate from Sarnia-Lambton for veterans' rights.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"It has often been said: 'If we don't remember the past, we are doomed to repeat it.' With turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II?

"We must not forget our Canadian men and women who have made the supreme sacrifice in Afghanistan.

"I urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare November 11, Remembrance Day, a statutory holiday in Ontario; lest we forget."

I agree and submit my name as well and send them down with Kieran.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I am pleased to present a number of petitions from around the province. The petitions are in support of Bill 100: paved shoulders on provincial highways.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

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"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under" certain conditions; and

"Whereas since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and provid-

ing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Carina.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have a petition in support of Bill 100, the paved shoulders on provincial highways.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I agree with this petition, and I'm going to pass it to Nicholas to take to the table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury.

"Whereas a company's resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike" or lock-out.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Emmett.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I present a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to

access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson’s who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson’s are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson’s who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this and present it to one of the new pages, Jayden.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send to the clerks with page Nicholas.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question concerning community care access centres given by the Acting Premier. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I’d indicate that I’ll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale. If I could, if you’ll just allow me a two-second indulgence to thank the member from Willowdale, my parliamentary assistant, for the very hard work that he has been doing on this and so many other files.

The interesting point about the role of a parliamentary assistant is that they do so much of the important supportive work that enables a minister such as myself to stand up and address the second reading of a piece of legislation. They are able to coordinate stakeholder input. They are able to discern policy direction that should be taken. They’re able to identify issues that arise before they actually become crystallized in legislation. And then, of course, once a bill is actually introduced, they’re really charged with the carriage of the legislation during the debate, during the hearings process, whether that’s a public hearings process in Toronto or across the province, and the continued debate under third reading. It’s an extremely important role, and I just want to thank my parliamentary assistant for his work and all parliamentary assistants for the work that they do.

Applause.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Absolutely.

We’re here to debate the good government bill. It is not unusual that governments have good government bills. We are not the first one and this won’t be the last one ever introduced, but almost every year there is a good government bill. The purpose of a good government bill, among other things, is to bring together those legislative or enabling initiatives that by themselves are not substantive enough to form a piece of legislation—that’s first; second, that are necessary and important for the better functioning of either other acts or society in general; and third, that tend to be—today’s debate may prove the exception—less controversial than some pieces of legislation. So they tend to be that way. As I say, you never know and today may be one of the exceptions that proves the rule.

The members of this House will recall that last fall we brought forward a very hefty good government bill and there was much comment on its heft, its content. The fact of the matter is that those initiatives, whether multi-sectioned or just very specific, come forward from

recommendations made by many. I know some of my colleagues will speak to this in a little while.

1400

That piece of legislation last year garnered lots of discussion and lots of debate, but now it's out in force and it is being implemented and it is enabling, as I said, the better functioning and working of legislation that benefits all of the people of the province of Ontario.

What we had in the spring, of course, was the Open for Business legislation, which contained many of the sections that might otherwise have gone into a good government bill, because it really is important that Ontario, as a trading province, a trading jurisdiction, where so much of our wealth is generated through interaction with trading partners not just throughout Canada but throughout the world—it is essential that we have an economic foundation that supports job activity, job creation, wealth creation in the province of Ontario. That Open for Business legislation contained many different provisions, initiatives and directions supporting the work that we've done over a number of years to make sure that the legislation we had in place functioned as well as possible and, maybe even more substantially, that the economic activity of the province was able to proceed in these terribly difficult and challenging times as effectively as possible.

Directing my mind, then, to the specifics of this piece of good government legislation, there are a lot of different changes. There are about 70 amendments to legislation. I'm only going to touch on a few of them, and I suspect that my parliamentary assistant will be touching on a few others.

Interjection.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As my friend opposite indicated, yes, he will bat cleanup, it being the baseball season for playoffs, although I can tell you that my Leafs are doing extremely well. I've actually suggested that maybe we should hold the parade now just in case, with the great record that they've got so far.

There are 70 amendments to pieces of legislation, and, as I say, most of these won't be controversial. Most of them would never have come to the attention of members of the Legislature but for the detailed reading of the provisions of the good government piece of legislation that I know every member is conducting right now. They are necessary to enhance, enable or promote the good working of government, the good working of pieces of legislation.

Let me address the Justices of the Peace Act and the approach that we have taken to the appointment of justices of the peace. Now, as all members will know, justices of the peace, as judicial officials, are enormously important participants in our system of justice. They not only are involved in the criminal justice process, dealing, for example, with bail hearings, determinations of whether accused will be released from custody or not—and in that sense they make very important decisions determining the freedom or not, and under what conditions, of people who have been arrested and detained;

they are also involved in the very important function of the case and its movement through the justice system: whether it is going to be set down for trial, whether it's going to be set down for a preliminary hearing, taking the election as to the mode of trial. But beyond the criminal justice system, they are involved in the trial of matters under various provincial statutes, some of which contain relatively modest penalties, some of which contain very, very significant and serious penalties—potentially huge fines or imprisonment.

So a justice of the peace performs an extremely important role, and I want to thank, on behalf of the people of Ontario and this House, the justices of the peace for the very important work that they do—the not always easy work, not always popular work, but very important work that they do every single day.

Several years ago, my predecessor in this post, now Michael Bryant, then the member for St. Paul's—

Applause.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —yes, absolutely—moved certain reforms to the approach that we take for appointing justices of the peace. It was not a standard approach up to that point in time, and it was not an approach which reflected the approach that this Legislature and the governments of Ontario, of all parties, have taken toward the appointment of judges. This House will recall that then-Attorney General Ian Scott fundamentally changed the approach to the appointment of judges—judicial officials—in this province by setting up an arm's-length process. That arm's-length process has continued. It continued through the then Liberal government of David Peterson, the New Democratic government which followed and the Progressive Conservative government which followed after that, and it continues to this day.

The reforms that my predecessor, Michael Bryant, brought into the justice of the peace appointment process very much standardized the approach and very much created significant, high standards for the appointment and very much created a process which was arm's length from the government. They were important reforms. They were far-reaching reforms, important because the appointments process for judicial officials should be seen, should be a transparent one and should be, as much as possible, an impartial one and an arm's-length one and a non-partisan one, and it is important that those who are appointed to such high office do have at least a certain standard of qualification that will give all confidence in the process.

Elevating the confidence of the people of the province of Ontario in our system of justice, which is the strongest in the world, notwithstanding its challenges, notwithstanding the issues that arise from day to day—we know that our system of justice is the strongest possible system of justice in the world and we know it for many reasons, but we know it for one reason: that people from all over the world come to Canada and Ontario because they know that whatever other reason they come here for, they know that their rights and freedoms will be protected and

respected in Ontario and in Canada in ways they might not be elsewhere.

When those previous justice of the peace reforms were introduced, they established minimum qualifications for the appointment of a justice of the peace, requiring, for example, either a university degree, comparable community college accreditation such as a diploma or its equivalent, life experience and at least 10 years of paid or volunteer work experience. It was important to establish these minimum qualifications.

Those reforms also established a new justices of the peace appointments advisory committee, or JPAAC, to make the appointment process more open and more transparent. That JPAAC has judicial officials on it—judges; justices of the peace; members of the community, both lawyers and non-lawyers—who are appointed. But that appointments process very much runs on its own, according to the statutory or regulatory requirements. I'm going to come back to that in just a moment.

Those previous reforms expanded the power of the Justices of the Peace Review Council to allow the council to conduct hearings and make dispositions, including recommendations for removal. They gave some increased flexibility in the system and improved access to judicial resources by our municipal partners, because of course they are ultimately responsible, according to steps taken by a previous government, for the administration of justice as it pertains to the Provincial Offences Act and various offences thereunder.

You say, "Well, what kind of reforms or approach are necessary and included in this good government bill?" One of the requirements of those previous reforms is that there be annual advertising for those who might like to be justices of the peace. That's good because the ads are all placed. They're public and everybody can apply. They apply to the secretariat. There's a place to apply. It's all transparent and the applications go there.

1410

The challenge is that people from all over the province would be invited to apply but in some parts of the province we didn't actually have an opening for a justice of the peace, or we had a lot of openings in a particular area for those, for example, who might speak French as a first language or at least as a second language well enough that they can conduct trials in French.

So we had a bit of a disconnect between the application process as it was functioning and the on-the-ground needs from time to time, and this was identified. It would be identified directly by us, but it would be identified by a number of my colleagues from all parties who would hear from individuals who had applied to be a justice of the peace only to find out that there weren't actually any vacancies in the particular area.

Now, that's not good, so we got advice, and the advice really was to make sure that the application process much more closely resembled that that we use for judges; so, again, above reproach. In other words, if you've got a vacancy, advertise then and there. If you don't have a vacancy, you don't advertise. That type of flexibility has been built into this proposed piece of legislation.

It's a time-honoured approach used by governments of all parties the last 20-plus years. It really does enable the judiciary, the government, to make sure there are enough judicial officials in a particular region to meet the needs, and it means that people who might be interested in becoming a justice of the peace, who might get excited over seeing an ad, will not be disappointed later on, on learning not only did they not get the job but there was no job to get. That's not what we want to have happen.

That's one of the changes that we have proposed and we hope will be made if this piece of legislation is approved. We can do it within a region when and where a vacancy occurs. You're targeting the requests.

A second change that we are proposing in this piece of legislation involves the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Part of the responsibilities of the AGCO, I'll call it, is to hear the various appeals under the Licence Appeal Tribunal. Right now, that function of the Licence Appeal Tribunal is sort of housed within the very broad parameters of the AGCO. The AGCO, therefore, has a very strong and important policy mandate and the Licence Appeal Tribunal has the adjudicative mandate.

It seems to make sense that the adjudicative mandate be moved to a different ministry, to be housed there, enabling the AGCO to concentrate exclusively on the policy mandate. This seems to make sense. The Licence Appeal Tribunal provides expert appeals process for compensation claims and licensing activities under 22 different statutes. What we're proposing is that that adjudicative function under several of those statutes go from the AGCO to the Licence Appeal Tribunal and to a different ministry.

The commission will then be able to focus on its governance and policy-making roles. They include the regulation, for example, of the sales, service and consumption of alcohol in public places, and casinos, commercial lotteries, charitable gaming and electronic gaming.

The Licence Appeal Tribunal takes over the adjudicative functions from the AGCO, as directed under the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, the Gaming Control Act, the Liquor Licence Act and the Vintners Quality Alliance Act, all of which move over to the Licence Appeal Tribunal and out of the AGCO. We want to make sure that these industries are operated in a socially responsible manner through effective regulations that are fair and responsive to the public interest.

There are a few other provisions that I'll just speak to briefly. Having those adjudicative functions taken out of the AGCO and given to the Licence Appeal Tribunal elsewhere I think is a very good step. It makes for a better approach and will, as I say, enable the AGCO to concentrate all of its time and energy on the policy functions. The Licence Appeal Tribunal, in the different place, is where it should be.

Under the Provincial Offences Act, there are just a few little changes and amendments. Sometimes appeals are launched for good reasons when they're launched, but then they sit there and nobody advances them. Somebody

gets convicted of an offence and they say, "Do you know what? I want to preserve my right to appeal"—and you need to take steps; the public should know this. If you get convicted of an offence and you want to appeal, you actually have to get on it. You don't have an unlimited period of time in which to launch an appeal; you need to go and speak to somebody right away and launch the appeal. Sometimes those appeals are launched and then people might lose interest, decide they don't want to proceed with it. We don't want appeals that are never going to be proceeded with or are not being proceeded with just sitting there. So there is a provision here that will strengthen the Provincial Offences Act and expands the ability of the court clerk to seek dismissal of appeals that appear to be abandoned. The dismissal of appeals that appear to be abandoned is something that is pursued at all levels of court, so there's nothing terribly unusual about this, and all the usual protections would apply, so if an appeal got dismissed as abandoned but it really wasn't, there's always the ability to come back before the court and say, "Hey, wait a minute. That shouldn't have happened." That is an ability.

I don't want to address these in great length at this point, but there are changes under the Business Corporations Act. We're proposing several amendments to the Business Corporations Act that would improve services to businesses by providing greater flexibility and increasing the government's ability to respond to the needs of businesses when it comes to making changes to regulations and forms. It's sort of consistent with the approach that we took in the Open for Business Act. Now, one of the proposed changes would clarify that a person who enters into an oral or written contract on behalf of a corporation before the corporation comes into existence may assign, amend or terminate that contract up to the time when the contract is formally adopted by the corporation.

The proposed changes would also address situations where a shareholder holds uncertificated shares, or shares without a certificate. The proposed changes would provide for an exception to the requirement to surrender share certificates to the corporation in circumstances regarding rights of dissenting shareholders; that is, shareholders who do not agree with the majority decision.

There are other proposed amendments that deal with the takeover of a bid situation. Other proposed amendments to the Business Corporations Act would, if passed, transfer seven regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the Minister of Government Services, just so there's more flexibility, so you can keep up with the needs of business. The fact of the matter is that things are changing very quickly. Things are changing very quickly in the business world, and you don't want there to be an undue reg-making process that effectively slows down or impedes the competitiveness of Ontario business.

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Similar amendments are proposed for the Business Names Act, the Corporations Information Act, the Extra-Provincial Corporations Act and the Limited Partnerships

Act, again increasing flexibility and allowing the ministry to respond more quickly to administrative needs such as updating forms.

The Ministry of Government Services is also proposing changes to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999. One of these changes would, if passed, delete the current restriction that no more than three members can sit on a panel. It might have been right then, but things change, and you want to give some flexibility. If you need more than three, well, why not?

Before I turn it over to my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Willowdale, in conclusion, what we're proposing here is a series of amendments and changes, hopefully relatively innocuous, hopefully that meet with broad support, but effectively to support the better functioning of various statutes and regulations, and that is for better government for all Ontarians and a stronger society.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to speak to this bill, the Good Government Act, 2010. Although, on the face of it, it seems technical, which it is, and dry, which it probably is, these good government bills are really essential to the good governance of Ontario. That's why it's called the Good Government Act.

I just want to set a little context here. I expect that we're going to hear a lot of debate from the official opposition about flaws that they perceive in this Good Government Act.

Interjections.

Mr. David Zimmer: As they've said over there, they're going to be doing their job. They're going to be criticizing and harping about various things that they think should be better and so on. But let me just lay this context. Albeit this bill is technical and it may be a bit dry, everything in this bill is important to the good governance of Ontario. It's what we are sent here as legislators to do.

Here's what has happened recently: The officials at the Ministry of the Attorney General, both on the political side and on the public service side, knowing that there was a lot of detail and a lot of technical stuff in this bill, and that it was all directed toward the good governance of Ontario, those persons, thinking—I think, rightly so—that the opposition parties should be interested in the good governance bill, offered to brief the official opposition and the third party.

I can say that the third party took that offer up responsibly. A detailed briefing was provided to the third party, because the third party was interested in the substance and the details so that they could effectively debate the bill. The same offer was made to the official opposition: "Come and have a briefing on the Good Government Act." Surely you're interested in good governance in Ontario. That's what you're grinding away in question period about all the time; that's what you're grinding away about in all of your speeches.

Do you know that not one opposition member took up the offer to attend that briefing on this very, very

important bill, the Good Government Act, 2010? That tells me something about the sincerity of the official opposition in wanting to participate in the good governance of Ontario. I expect that when the debate shifts to the official opposition, we're going to hear a lot of posturing, we're going to hear a lot of ranting and we're going to hear a lot of criticism. But they did not take the opportunity to avail themselves, as the third party did, of that briefing. I've had those briefings myself. I've sat in on those briefings, and they are quality briefings. Anyone who is interested in governance issues at the level that we all here in this chamber should be interested—I think it's incumbent upon them; they have a duty to attend those briefings.

I'm sorry that the official opposition chose not to participate in that briefing. I think it would have been a better debate had they come properly informed and with a proper appreciation of what the intent of the bill was and what the substance of the bill was.

Good governance acts are something that every government brings forward every couple of years. The Attorney General made reference to one in the last couple of years, and I participated in that one. That was a rather lengthy one, and it addressed and sort of did a housekeeping sweep through years and years of legislation that had been sitting on the books and that really needed some cleanup. This legislation will help us to keep up with the times; it will help us remain current. If passed, the bill would provide a new clarity and a new modernization of a number of provincial laws, regulations and systems. After all, that's what good governance is all about.

I am, I repeat, sorry that the official opposition chose not to participate in that briefing process. They should have participated in that briefing process, because the bill contains about 70 amendments to legislation involving seven different ministries. Most of the provisions are very technical in nature to the existing acts. But, again, if you reflect back on them, if you've had the benefit of the briefing, you will see that they improve the clarity of the law, they make the law more pointed and they make the law more able to achieve its end.

The second thing that this bill does is it fits hand in glove with our government's Open for Business initiative, because one of the criticisms, and in many cases properly so, that we hear from businesses in Ontario, and businesses that want to come to Ontario, is that they need more clarity in the legislation of Ontario. They need to be able to read some of this legislation themselves and quickly grasp it and quickly understand it. I know that this is something that's important to helping Ontario grow its economy, because to the extent that we can make our legislative regime here in Ontario effective and attractive to business, we are going to create new jobs; it's that important.

So I say yet again, for about the fourth or fifth time, that given the importance of this bill, the importance that the provisions of the bill are going to have in terms of attracting business and giving business a greater level of confidence, a greater efficiency, I would have thought

that the official opposition would have participated in that briefing process. It's going to be interesting to see what they say this afternoon coming into it absent that briefing.

One of the big targets, one of the big goals in the Open for Business Ontario is to decrease the regulatory burden and to set up the legislation, the governance of Ontario, so that it is more responsive, so there is a quicker response time to the needs of the economy. One of the things that businesses and people who want to do business here in Ontario look for is a responsive legislative process, so that if there's something that needs fixing, something that needs addressing, there is a mechanism so that it can be quickly spoken to, quickly addressed and quickly remedied. That's what many of the amendments in this good governance bill are designed to do.

The other thing that this bill is designed to do, in addition to helping business navigate our legislative regime here in Ontario, is to help members of the public, because they are interacting with government on a daily basis through all of the 70 pieces of legislation that we're amending. Whether it's a teenager who has to deal with the Ministry of Transportation, a senior citizen who has an issue with the government or a single mother—anybody who has an issue with the government—to the extent that we can make our legislative regime more navigable to them, that's a good thing.

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If passed, we are going to have a more streamlined, effective and responsive system in place for business and for the public. That's the theme. That's the context of the legislation.

Let me just give you an idea of some of the technical things that we have to deal with. For instance, there are a number of proposed changes to the Evidence Act. That's important for the judges, for the crown attorneys, for the lawyers and for the members of the public; for the accused in criminal offences and for people participating in our judicial system in the non-criminal sense. These changes are going to help the courts adjust to new technology in court reporting and transcribing services.

There is an additional proposed change to the Occupational Health And Safety Act that, if passed, would repeal sections that refer to outdated technology such as telegrams. When was the last time anybody dealt with a telegram here in Ontario? And yet in many ways there are various provisions in the legislation where one can telegram this or you have to notify something by telegram. These are simple housekeeping matters, but this is the oil that keeps the wheels of our legislative system turning effectively and efficiently.

Bills like this one have become more important in the Ontario Legislature because it's a process that works. Every other jurisdiction here in Canada has modeled itself on the Ontario approach; that is, at regular intervals a good government bill to tidy up, to rationalize, to deal with the anomalies and the unintended consequences that inevitably develop in the course of a piece of legislation that's been on the books.

Let me just say a word about something you might find interesting in the Ontario Energy Board Act. A proposed amendment to the Ontario Energy Board Act is going to help the province move forward with its commitment to the green economy. How is that going to work? It's going to remove some of the uncertainty in the act that may have discouraged local distribution companies from proceeding with clean, renewable energy projects. That is a very, very important piece of house-keeping because we've had days and days of debate here about energy issues.

Again, I come back now for perhaps the fifth or sixth time: I'm surprised that the official opposition would not take up the offer for a thorough and candid briefing on this act. They purport to be interested in Ontario's economy, they purport to be interested in good governance, but when given the opportunity to participate in the process, they don't participate. But they will grind away, I expect, in the debate this afternoon.

Let me say something about the Education Act. That's something that is of critical importance to the people of Ontario because the quality of the education that we provide our citizens, particularly our young people in high schools, colleges, training and apprenticeships, is really in many ways the future of the Ontario economy. It's the key to the future of a good life here in Ontario because we are going to depend on the engineers, the businesspeople, the carpenters, the electricians, the doctors. Education is of critical importance.

There will be some technical amendments that, if passed, would rescind some of the outdated acts. The Essex County French-language Secondary School Act, 1977, is 33 years old. That act is simply redundant since the province created the French-language school boards servicing the area. That's something that just needs addressing and cleaning up. The act would also clarify the minister's authority to add terms and conditions to the permission given to school boards to offer French immersion programs. That's very important for all our francophone Ontarians. This will clarify the intent of the legislation for both English and French school boards.

Let me say something about some of the amendments that are going to affect the Employment Standards Act. Again, the legislation governing the regime surrounding employment in Ontario is critical because we need protected employees. We need a relationship between the employer and the employee that is harmonious, and we need those things because we want to build an Ontario workforce second to none. Why? To build our economy. Why do we want to build our economy? So that we have people paying taxes; so we have money for health care, schools, education, bridges and roads. This may seem sort of dry and technical, but these issues are important.

The proposed amendment to the Employment Standards Act would replace—and this is how technical it gets—the word “week” with the term “workweek” under the Employment Standards Act. If that's passed, that would ensure consistent wording and interpretation among the provisions of this act and its regulations,

because sometimes there's a disconnect between what we mean by “workweek” and what we mean by “week” and then people get into debates about it, and it creates misunderstandings and difficult employment relationships. So that's why something like this is important.

The amendment would also make the language in the section consistent with the Ministry of Labour's long-standing interpretation, which is that overtime pay entitlements under the act are determined with reference to the employee's established workweek and not to any period of seven days. Now, that's a technical amendment, but it has huge import both to the employee and the employer. Again, that's why this good government legislation is important.

There are a number of amendments dealing with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We've heard a lot in the past months about occupational health and safety acts. These amendments are designed, again, to bring greater clarity and harmony to that relationship. That's good for Ontario; that's good for our economy; that's good for the citizens.

If the opposition is really interested in good governance in Ontario, participate in the briefings and come to the debate informed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened carefully to the parliamentary assistant, as I did to the minister. Ah, jeez, I hate doing this. This is one of those days where I wish I hadn't come to work, because I like the parliamentary assistant—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know, but what was that all about?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, no, the parliamentary assistant delivers a fine speech. There was a US senator back during the Vietnam War years who was at Maple Leaf Gardens. It was a big, highly announced event. He was a potential presidential candidate. He was going to announce his seven-point plan to end the war in Vietnam. But he was also known by his staff as not being as thorough as he should be. He was a busy guy, apparently. He stayed up late at night but wasn't doing the things he ought to have been doing. So his staff gave him his script with his seven-point plan, and he went into Maple Leaf Gardens—it was full of anti-war people; the sentiment was strong—and he read page 1 and point 1, and the crowd cheered; then point 2, and the crowd cheered; point 3, and he turned the page again and it said, “Now you're on your own, you lazy SOB.”

My dear friend, you're not lazy; you're a smart man. You're a capable parliamentary assistant. You're a good lawyer, but what you said about the Evidence Act just isn't so. Check the act. Read it. The only amendment it makes to the Evidence Act is to change the regulation-making power in the Evidence Act from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the Attorney General. There are no other amendments to the Evidence Act. There are no changes whatsoever in the evidentiary standard to be

applied at the provincial application of the provincial Evidence Act.

So, dear parliamentary assistant—not you. You, the minions who fed him those lines, shame on you. Shame on every one of you. You set him up, and that's not fair. He's too decent a guy to be treated like that. Whether the Premier's office did it, I don't know, but the parliamentary assistant got set up. He was pretty darn close on a whole lot of the other stuff, and I'm going to compliment him for that when I get my hour in due course, but you set him up on the portion of the comments about the Evidence Act, darn it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm particularly pleased that the member from Welland is such a huge fan of the member from Willowdale, as am I and many of us in this place.

I think he did a fine job during his time speaking to this Good Government Act, 2010. He served admirably as the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General during his time here, and stayed there because of the expertise that he brings to this place, and provides advice to stakeholders, in part, in that role.

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As to the legislation itself, these are important pieces of legislation. As he said, other jurisdictions are modelling what Ontario is doing in looking at legislation and strategies and structures so that dated pieces of legislation that either need to have some updating, need some tweaking, some fine-tuning so they work effectively when there are pieces of them that don't work as well as they should—that there's a means to get those forward. It doesn't mean that we have to use the debate time of this place for single pieces of legislation to make minor changes to them; we can capture those. Often they are technical. We can capture those under one piece of legislation, in this particular case being the Good Government Act, 2010.

He referenced, in his speaking, as well as the minister, that the bill includes approximately 70 amendments to legislation for seven different ministries. This seems to be not only an effective use of debate time here, but an opportunity, obviously, to get the necessary changes to make sure that legislation that is in place—70 different pieces in this case, in multiple ministries—are as effective as they can be. That doesn't mean that they're necessarily going to be perfect at the end of the day, but it does mean there will be pieces of them that will work better than they have in the past.

As I say, most of this is technical in nature. Some of it could be considered housekeeping activities. But it's important legislation, and I believe the parliamentary assistant and the minister have done a fine job in introducing this legislation to us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen to the Attorney General and, more recently, to the member from Willowdale, the parliamentary assistant. Three things come to mind in

this bill. First of all, it's an omnibus bill. There are very few pages, 36 pages; there are seven ministries that are impacted. When you're dealing with a government in their last year, I feel that I'm somewhat suspicious. I like to think of the last few changes they've made here, whether it's on energy or the eco tax, as sort of a frame of backtracking on a number of important government initiatives.

The people of Ontario should be somewhat cautious in terms of thinking this is just a housekeeping bill. I would say that in my own case, most of us over here—I'm waiting for our member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to speak, because there are sections here, although administrative types of amendments, they do download most of the decision-making to civil servants, basically, in a regulatory environment, where it will never come to the House. Whether it's the labour bill changes, the Ministry of Health, the community care access centres, long-term care—these are areas of great upheaval and change. They're not adequately funded in children's aid, they're not adequately funded in long-term care, yet they're providing these oversights and they're weakening them. They are really weakening them, because they're taking them out of the public forum, where there is accountability, into a forum where the registrar may make certain types of changes. Even in the judiciary system they're making changes that leave me questioning.

Now, these questions are at a time when Premier McGuinty's government is on the slide a bit, and they would say anything to get off the hook. So I am very concerned that this bill, although administrative in nature, can open the door for weakening the function of government itself.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I just wanted to comment briefly on process, in terms of the parliamentary assistant lamenting that none of the opposition had requested a briefing on this bill. I might want to remind the parliamentary assistant that this bill was only introduced on October 5, two weeks ago. As you know, Madam Speaker, last week members were off on a constituency week. I was in Ottawa taking care of my constituents at that time, so while the bill was introduced on the 5th, we were out of here on the 7th or 8th and there was really no opportunity for us to set up a meeting, to have a briefing on this bill.

I might say as well to the parliamentary assistant that when that evil Harris government was in power back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, what we did on omnibus bills like this of a housekeeping nature was that before we introduced them, we offered the opposition the opportunity to be briefed on what we intended to bring forward to the Legislature. We asked the opposition if they objected to various different sections of the bill, and they were removed if the opposition had significant objections to any part of those omnibus bills. To me, that's the way to do a good government omnibus bill: to

give the opposition a real opportunity to complain and remove what is objectionable. Then, in having unanimous consent in the Legislature, very little debate was necessary in here because most of it was of a technical nature and was agreed to by the opposition.

So I think it's a little disingenuous for the parliamentary assistant to claim that we did not request the opportunity for a briefing when in fact there has been no chance for that to occur.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Willowdale has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: I do want to respond to the member for Durham's comments, because I had my pen out and I just jotted down some of the things that the member for Durham said—whom I can't name, but he's the member for Durham in the light tan suit there with a happy smile on his face.

He used expressions in his two-minuter like this: He said he'd studied the bill. He had the bill in his hand there, and he said he had some important criticisms. He went on to say that there were in the bill—and I'm quoting him here—"areas of great upheaval and change." He went on to say, I think, that the changes are important in their very nature. He sort of concluded his remarks by saying that he was very concerned that this bill will weaken government.

Mr. John O'Toole: Concerned and suspicious.

Mr. David Zimmer: The member has corrected me. I guess he did say that he was concerned and suspicious.

So I take that expression of real concern and, again, I balance that against the member for Durham, who would not take up the Attorney General's offer for a briefing on this bill. I mean, you can't have it both ways. You feign great interest and great concern about various aspects of this bill. The Attorney General says, "Come and we'll have a comprehensive briefing on it." Take up the offer, as did the third party. Come to the debate informed.

So when I see that sort of disconnect between action, in not coming to the briefing, and comment or hectoring in the chamber, I think it raises issues of credibility.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 110. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I seek unanimous consent that our leadoff be deferred until a later date, as our critic is unable to speak at this time. So if I could ask—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has asked for unanimous consent to defer their lead. Is that the pleasure of the House? Agreed. Thank you.

Continue.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. I appreciate the reminder, but I might have done it at some point.

Interjection: At some point.

Mr. John Yakabuski: At some point, yes, I say to my friend from Welland, Mr. Kormos.

Let me just start by speaking to the address not from the Attorney General so much, because he was getting into the minutiae, but my friend from Willowdale. I hope he stays around for this, because I think it would be helpful to him. My friend from Willowdale went on ad infinitum; do you know how often—

Interjection: Ad nauseam.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, thank you very much—ad nauseam about the opposition not declining or being unable to schedule, but "refusing" a briefing on the bill. As my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills said, the bill was introduced on October 5, which was a Tuesday. The Legislature sat on Wednesday and Thursday and then did not sit again until today. This is the first time, as my colleague said—there was a constituency break so that members had the opportunity to travel back and spend a little extra time, a little extended time, in their constituencies following the Thanksgiving weekend to perhaps make a little more significant contact than we tend to make just being home on weekends while the House is in session.

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I want to talk a little bit about those briefings. My history of the briefings being done by this government—and again, my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Mr. Sterling, talked about how we had a different approach in government in offering significant pre-briefing to members of the then opposition so that they had at least a sense and perhaps an impact or input into some contentious portions of a bill that we could have maybe improved upon before it even came to this House. Good thinking.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Actually, that's committee.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. My friend from Prince Edward-Hastings has got it wrong. She has to start listening right from the start.

To my friend from Willowdale—the member from Willowdale talked about the briefings that were refused by the members of the opposition. Let me tell you, you go back a little bit when George Smitherman—do you remember George Smitherman?

Mr. Robert Bailey: George who?

Mr. John Yakabuski: George Smitherman. He was the energy minister who wants to be mayor of Toronto and who claimed that his Green Energy Act—now let me remind you about the Green Energy Act. You want to talk about an omnibus bill, this bill, Bill 110, which is a tongue-in-cheek called the good government bill—the Green Energy Act amended, I believe, if my memory serves me correctly I say to my friend from Willowdale, 21 separate acts, and affected, I believe, 15 different ministries. George Smitherman introduced the act one day and the next day debate began before we had any opportunity to be briefed on the bill at all.

It gets better than that. Then, I was able to schedule a briefing as the critic. The briefings from these guys over

here—the member from Willowdale wants to talk about how wonderful and important and informative they are. This was the act: It was 100 and some pages; 15 ministries and 21 acts were being affected by it. The briefing was a grand total of an hour, which they shrunk to about 45 minutes. The bureaucrats came in with a little slide deck. The paper copies of a slide deck; you could do it on an overhead or on a computer. You know, the programmes on the computer, I can't think of the name now—

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: PowerPoint.

Mr. John Yakabuski: PowerPoint. Thank you very much, I say to the member from Pickering–Ajax or Scarborough–Pickering, or something like that. It's tougher now; I do know his name but I can't say it.

So anyway, a PowerPoint presentation on paper. They come in with this little fan deck or slide deck. They give us the spiel; that took about 20 to 25 minutes. Then you've got a few more minutes to ask some questions. I had other members of my caucus there because this was a substantial piece of legislation. The minister had already spoken on it. He talked about how the Green Energy Act was going to add 1% per year.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Willowdale has a point of order.

I'm sorry; the Clerk has just alerted me that the member from Willowdale is not in his seat, so we will continue with debate.

Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know he wants to move up in those seats and that's why he's being obedient to his Premier, you see?

Mr. David Zimmer: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I know that in these debates the Speaker allows a certain indulgence to wander off topic, but we're here to discuss the Good Government Act, not an energy act in a previous administration.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you very much. I'm quite capable of doing my job as Speaker, thank you.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, continue with the debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Willowdale, as I've heard from my colleague from Welland, Peter Kormos, is a lawyer. Mr. Kormos has indicated that he is a good lawyer. I can't comment on whether he's a good lawyer or not, but I accept that he's a good lawyer.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I just want to refer to, if I can, the Speaker's ruling this morning in respect to using both the riding and members' names. I think he clarified that it was only the one that should be referenced, not both.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Absolutely. You're correct on that. Thank you.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm sure that when Speaker Peters is in the chair, he's going to honour that. I think that's more about question period—the cut and the thrust,

as the Speaker said—where we have to make sure that we don't cross too many lines.

Anyway, the member for Willowdale is a fine lawyer, according to my friend from Welland, PK. He should know. I'm not a lawyer; therefore, I'm not tainted.

Mr. Peter Kormos: To your credit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To my credit, absolutely. I have—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would actually ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to withdraw that comment of “tainted.” Would you withdraw?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could be just a can of tuna then, maybe.

I say to the member for Willowdale—I have watched a few episodes of Law & Order; it's my favourite show. Now they took it off the air. I miss Sam Waterston as Jack McCoy so much.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Try Judge Judy, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's not the same. Anyway, I remember in some of his talks—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I will ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to get back to the bill that's under discussion in debate right now. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am, Madam Speaker—Bill 110. The point I'm making is that, in law, you cannot close a door that you yourself opened. I heard Jack say that so many times. So I say to the member from Willowdale: You opened the door. We're coming through. You can't close it.

I want to talk about these briefings, because he's chastising our members and our good critic for not participating at this point. We're more than prepared to participate in the briefing—hell, I think we could do a better job of running them than those people across on the other side.

Anyway, here is the briefing on the Green Energy Act—15 ministries, 21 acts. We're now into the second half hour of a one-hour briefing. We start to ask some questions, and the response is, “I'm sorry, we can't answer that. It's in the deck.” The deck is about 17 pages, spaced big enough that I could read it even without my glasses. The act is a hundred and some pages, small enough that I can't read it without my glasses, and every time we ask a question, we get, “Oh, I'm sorry. We can't answer that.”

This member, under instructions from the Premier's office to come in here and chastise people on the opposition side for not being able to take part in a briefing at this point and spend that kind of time in debate—how many times did he mention it? So often that I am really quite disappointed that there would be that kind of emphasis, when what we should be talking about is the premise behind Bill 110.

What is interesting is that it speaks to what is going on on the other side. We saw it this weekend at their con-

vention. At the Liberal convention or mini-convention or whatever you want to call it this weekend, the name most mentioned wasn't Dalton McGuinty; it was Tim Hudak and Mike Harris. Those were the names that were being mentioned at their convention, so it speaks to where their mentality is and where their fear is. They're more concerned about what other people are doing than what they're doing themselves.

Let's talk about good government. The Attorney General talked about—Madam Speaker, it was interesting. You listened to it yourself, and I think I saw a smile on your face.

Maybe I could get some more water, if I could, and if you have anything else to put in it, that would be all right, too.

The Attorney General talked about—it seems every year we have a bill that has something like “good government” in the title.

You know, the people in Ontario are not starving and thirsting for another bill that has “good government” in the title. What they're starving and thirsting for is good government. We don't need it in a title; we need it to be delivered. And this bill, oh, it's another housekeeping bill which we're going to spend all kinds of time and debate on.

1500

There are a couple parts of it that should cause us to have some worry. My friend from Welland, PK, mentions how in one particular section of the bill, “Subsection 5(3) of the” Evidence “Act is amended to shift the regulation-making authority under that subsection from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the Attorney General.”

If you look at schedule 5, Ministry of Government Services: “The act is amended to transfer seven regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the minister.”

Are we going to have a situation where the cabinet—for those out in television land who don't understand what the Lieutenant Governor in Council is, that is the cabinet. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is the cabinet.

I just want to remind folks about the G20 summit this summer. When the cabinet, behind closed doors, and while this Legislature was sitting, gave powers to the police in Toronto, where was the briefing then? Where was the briefing then? Where was the briefing in this Legislature? Where was the ability for this Legislature to comment or to participate in that debate? But now, could we see a situation where those powers to delegate something to another party, whether it be police or otherwise—and let's get one thing straight: I think the police did a tremendous job here in Toronto. They were saddled with a difficult situation, but this government did everything it could do to hide from the public what rules and regulations they had enacted for the purpose of that summit. Could we now see a situation where the minister, on his own, without even the rest of the cabinet having input, could allow things like that to happen?

Now, I know that particular ministry is not involved. But a flag might need to be raised when you start to pass on those kinds of powers to the minister, as opposed to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

It's interesting that after seven years in power, you would like to think that if they had one good government bill in year one, and another one in year two, and another one in year three, they would have gotten around to actually having some good government. But here we are, getting near the end of their legislated term, and we're still sitting here debating legislation, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

It was interesting: This weekend, the Liberal Party faithful that gathered in Toronto—that was part of one of their overriding messages, good government. They came out with a slogan, something to the effect of “Ontario is worth fighting for.” Ontario deserves good government. Ontario is worth fighting for; there's no question about that. Many people went to war in 1914-18, 1939-45. They went to war in Korea in 1950-53 to defend democracy and freedoms throughout this world.

Is Ontario worth fighting for? Absolutely. Democracy is worth fighting for. Good government is worth fighting for. But it's also the responsibility of the party that has the honour of being chosen by the largest number of voters or, in our system, winning the largest number of seats, and in most cases it would also be the largest number of voters—they have a responsibility to deliver good government, not just talk about it. Good government is also about responding and being reflective of the needs and desires of the citizenry and also being cognizant of the ability of that citizenry to pay the bills.

So I ask the member for Willowdale, the Attorney General and all members on the other side of the House, is it good government when, against the will of the people, you raise electricity rates, both in the cost of the electricity itself, the delivery, and the additional charges, now including the HST? Is it good government when you raise those rates to the point that we have people in this province who simply can't make it anymore, when we have senior citizens in this province who are writing me every day—and I know they're writing my friend from Welland, PK, as well, because I see those issues raised in the House. My friend from Beaches—East York, MP, MPP—

Mr. Peter Kormos: His wife calls him Michael Prue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you know what? What his wife calls him is entirely between them, but in this House I can only call him the member for Beaches—East York, and I do this through you, Madam Speaker, of course. But if she calls him Michael Prue, that's her business.

My colleagues here, my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka, who I believe will be speaking to this bill as well, we're hearing these issues raised every day. I talk to seniors who built a house in the 1970s. Ontario was full of hope. They were being told, “The best way to heat that home is electrically. It's clean, no messing with any kind of oil, gas or anything like that.” Where that electricity came from was not the issue. At the time, “It's cheap, it's

clean and it's instant." Boom, boom. So they built those homes in those periods. They were the backbone of our society, working hard so they could build a home. They put electric heat in. Most of those people who built at that time were raising families, and they're now retired. They may even be aged. But they still have that electric heat because that home is their home. Now they're finding that they may not be able to stay there anymore. Why? It's because of the McGuinty government's callousness with regard to how it enforces their politics on the people of this province.

I see you're standing. I'm not—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have comments to make about this member's speech. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has hit the ball out of the park once again. He's filling in for his party's critic, doing the quasi lead, if you will. I'm pleased to be able to hear this member analyze this type of legislation, this omnibus bill, in which inevitably, as you approach it as one would a pilgarlic pate, and you discover more and more and more—a pilgarlic pate—the obviousness of the subtleties come to mind and emerge and rise to the surface.

So here the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: JY.
1510

Mr. Peter Kormos: —JY has discovered one of the more sinister elements of this legislation, and that is the abandonment of the cabinet scrutiny of any number of arbitrary powers. We've got concerns, and I'm going to have a chance to speak in a few minutes' time. I spent a lot of time thinking about this bill over the last weekend. I want to tell you about that too as I get into it. Good government: I spent a lot of time on the title, good government.

Good government doesn't mean that you eliminate the various controls that there are, however and notwithstanding how weak they can become at certain times. The Lieutenant Governor in Council has a control about it because it has other cabinet ministers involved in the decision-making. Ministerial regulation-setting power doesn't.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Obviously on this particular day—it must have been a very good weekend because he clearly didn't read the bill, hence the reason why he wanted to talk about everything except what's in the bill. So let's just talk about the bill.

What is a good government bill? It's a housecleaning. It's something that you do at home. It's called a fix-up. These are routine revisions, minor amendments, technical changes modernizing legislation and regulations while keeping intact their intent. That's what this bill is about. This bill takes a whole number of acts, dozens and dozens of them, and changes minor things while keeping intact the intent of the legislation.

Now, good government bills are done by governments of all levels and all political stripes at all times. In fact, they're normally done about twice, sometimes even three times a year, and they're always called good government bills. In fact, in the corporate sector, if you're reviewing your policies, you would call it housekeeping revisions.

Speaker, as you cut the member a little bit of latitude in some of his comments, I think I can take similar latitude and talk about some of the things that he said that weren't covered by this particular bill, about energy. He admitted that his party is taking us back to the 1970s—his own words.

It appears that good government, to the Progressive Conservative, consists of four principles: Principle 1, blame the Liberals; principle 2, do nothing and run it into the ground; principle 3, burn coal and then burn more coal; and principle 4, buy electricity on the US spot market. So there you are. There's the other party's policy.

Even the normally informed and eloquent member from Welland obviously didn't read the bill and dipped into his own deep well of rhetorical flourish.

Thank you; we'll pick it up here next time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to comment on the remarks from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; obviously well-researched and well-delivered.

I spent a total of eight days consulting. I didn't need any polling firm for myself. I spent four days at the plowing match and I also spent another four days at a regional fair in my area, Brigden Fair. It's the largest fair in south-western Ontario. Over 50,000 people attend it. I spent many hours there and spoke to most of those 50,000 who came, and to a person—and that's all income groups, all strata, from lower-income to middle-income to seniors to the more affluent—they all said that they were very upset, very concerned with this government. They don't need any polling firms, Ipsos Reid, Harris/Decima, any of them. They're concerned about the lack of good government in this province. They've told me that. They've signed petitions to the same effect.

As the member said, at this recent lovefest that they had in Toronto our leader's name was mentioned more than anyone else. Maybe there will be a Tim Hudak bill introduced by this government, because they mentioned his name so much. So that's good for us, that they mentioned his name.

I also noticed that, as the member said, there was the potential for a lack of cabinet scrutiny. Already a number of members of cabinet have said they had no idea about some of the things that happened with the G20 because they weren't made aware, they weren't in the loop. So what's to say, if this bill is improved and they make these changes to it, that any of those ministers will be better informed? As the member has covered, 21 acts and 15 ministries are going to be affected by this.

Like I said, those people who spoke to me at those two venues, in Elgin county and again in Lambton county, expressed their dissatisfaction with hydro rates, with

government in general, with this government and with the Premier's actions and lack of actions.

I look forward to the rest of the debate, and hopefully the member for Nipissing-Pembroke will be a cleanup hitter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. He has little pearls and gems of wisdom interspaced with good stories and humorous anecdotes. He made much of the whole procedure of briefings around here, and I know why he did it. He was responding in great part to the member from Willowdale. The member from Willowdale, of course, took great stock in the briefings that are made available to members of this House. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke quite rightly pointed out that they are of very limited value, especially to opposition members.

I have on occasion availed myself of those briefings. Generally what happens is, you go into a room. There is a slide presentation or sometimes a slide presentation on paper delivered by several earnest bureaucrats. But it is not the bureaucrats who answer or control the briefing. It is members of the minister's office who handle and control what happens in the briefing. When a member such as myself or any member in the opposition starts to ask questions, it is the bureaucrat or the worker from the minister's office who says, "We're not going to answer that. We can't answer that. That's not a question you can ask here. That's not a question you can ask of the bureaucrats."

Even when the bureaucrats want to answer the question, they are told they can't. Even when they say, "We have an answer and it is not controversial," they are told they can't.

So in the end, if members opposite want to know why opposition members do not avail themselves of this opportunity, it is because it is practically useless. We can read the bill ourselves. If all we're going to get is a slide show and someone from the minister's office saying that we can't ask the questions we want to ask, what is the sense of going to it at all?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Twenty minutes goes by so fast. I never even got into my notes; I was just into my preamble. Anyway, I certainly will respond to a couple of things. But while I'm here, I must say hello to some folks up in the gallery who are constituents of the Speaker in Elgin-Middlesex-London: Heiko Oegema, and I presume that's your wife with you, Heiko. I don't know her name. I've met Heiko but I don't know his wife. I know they're in the turkey business down there, so good to see you here.

Anyway, let's get back to the matter at hand here. Good Lord, the member for Mississauga-Streetsville—and I thank the members for Mississauga-Streetsville,

Welland, Sarnia-Lambton and, of course, my friend from Beaches-East York for their comments.

But boy, the member for Mississauga-Streetsville—it just shows where the mindset of the Liberal Party is today. He didn't want to talk about the bill; he wanted to talk about the Conservative Party, because these guys at their convention on the weekend—they don't want to talk about the Liberal record any more; they want to try to chase a ghost. This is how they're going to try to run the election. This is a party that used to say they run on hope. They use the Barack Obama philosophy: We have hope for the future in Ontario.

They don't want to talk about their own record because people in this province have lost hope under them. They've lost hope when they can't afford their hydro bills. They've lost hope when they see their gas bills and HST added to it, and they pull into a gas station and pay 8% more just because of the taxes being levied by this government. They've lost hope and they wonder who is going to deliver them hope.

I can tell you this, folks: It is the responsibility of all of us here to bring good government to Ontario. The people of Ontario are more and more every day believing that the only way to bring good government to Ontario is to change the government of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to be able to deliver the lead in response to the Attorney General and his parliamentary assistant on this bill. I want to tell you, I've thought about this bill for a good chunk of time and I'm going to speak about my reflection on this bill over the course of the next hour, and I wish I had more time, but unfortunately the rules don't allow that. The rules aren't always fair or just.

1520

I do want to welcome Ffion Hughes to the Legislature. She's our page from Thorold. She's a delightful young woman whose family I know well. They're going to be joining us on October 25, as I believe it, as I understand it.

Of course I've read the bill. I read the title of the bill, and this is an integral part of the debate because when the bill goes to committee—and this bill will go to committee. New Democrats will ensure that, because we're going to use our power under the standing orders to ensure that it goes to committee. As you know, one of the final acts of the committee is to have to approve the title of the bill. Why I raise that with you, Speaker, is because that makes it entirely appropriate as a subject matter of the debate on second reading, doesn't it? If one can debate the title of the bill in committee, as one can debate each and every section and subsection and sentence of the bill, one can also debate it here, I propose to you, on second reading. "An Act to promote good government"—good God, coming from these guys? "Good grief," maybe. I've already invoked the name of the deity, my goodness—

Interjection: Good riddance.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Good riddance, and then a whole bunch of other “goods” that are entirely unparliamentary and one can only think them, and I know that some of you can read my mind right now.

I was thinking about this bill—I had to be here on Friday morning—on Friday afternoon, when I went back down to Welland to pick up my truck over at David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street, a unionized dealership—my 1994 Chev pickup. They had to do the e-test, the emissions test. My 1994 Chevy pickup, S-10, is still passing the test well within the guidelines—the original engine; the whole nine yards; remarkable stuff. It’s a Chevy S-10. I suppose it’s because I buy it from a union dealership, David Chev-Olds, and have it serviced there, that it has done as well as it has, because it has several hundred thousand miles on it.

I was thinking about the bill, An Act to promote good government. I was thinking about the bill. I was with Malcolm Allen and his wife, Peggy Allen, over at the Moose Lodge on Riverside Drive on Friday evening for their weekly supper; good folks at the Moose Lodge in Welland. They had a turkey dinner on Friday night past: \$7.50 for turkey and the trimmings. If you were inclined, a shot of whisky or a beer would cost you an extra \$2. I commend the Moose Lodge, especially its branch in Welland, to anybody who wants to meet good folks and good people.

I was thinking about this bill while I was sitting with them and eating, while I’m talking to them. I was thinking about An Act to promote good government as the people at the Moose Lodge are telling me about the difficulties they’re having—a whole lot of seniors there at the Moose Lodge in Welland; good folks who worked hard all their lives. Ms. Tellier was there; her maiden name was Johancsik. I know her well. I knew her brother well. Her brother was a sign painter, Al Johancsik, an artist who came from out in Saskatchewan. A beautiful wife—she’s still alive in Welland. Al was a bohemian; he was from the Beat era; a very clever guy. He made my silkscreens by hand. We used to silkscreen our own signs. We didn’t pay Howard Moscoe or anybody like that to paint them for us.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, you didn’t. Al Johancsik was a brilliant artist. He taught me a whole lot about signage and colours. He did Mel Swart before me for a million years; Robert Wright; so many others. I was at Al’s funeral. It was at the Lutheran church, St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church. It was very sad, because I loved him a great deal. But his sister was there, Ms. Tellier. As a matter of fact, she mentioned—we were at the Moose Lodge—I’m talking to her, and Ms. Tellier is of a progressive ilk, a progressive mind. She and Johancsik came from Saskatchewan. They grow progressive people out there. Her daughter was having a party at Trappers the next night because she was going off to Australia to work for a year or so. I’ll tell you about Trappers in just a minute. That was Saturday night.

I wake up Saturday morning and I’ve still got this bill on my mind—good government—because I’m headed

over to the market square. Once again, yes, I know, you’re tired of hearing me talk about the Welland Market Square; I’m not, okay? I’m not. I’m talking to folks at the market square.

What do those folks tell me about? They tell me about electricity rates that are just skyrocketing, blowing the roof off. And I say to them, “Hey, sister,” brother, friend, “think about it”—because I don’t know about you but I haven’t turned my heat on yet. It got down to 55 in my old house on Bald Street; then my neighbours finally said, “Why don’t you close the windows?” I went, “Okay, good idea.” So I managed to get it up to 61 with just the ambient heat by last night, because down where I come from, you don’t turn your heat on in October. You just don’t.

Now, mind you, if you’re elderly—if you are 90, 94, 95 years old, and we’ve got a whole lot of folks like that—it’s a little tough. When they were youngsters, they had no problem waking up in 51 degree Fahrenheit temperatures or colder, but they’re elderly now; the circulation isn’t quite what it should be. These folks that I’m talking to at the market square, along with Malcolm Allen, our federal member, and Peggy Allen, his wonderful wife, are saying, “What is the McGuinty government doing with electricity rates?” It’s the HST to begin with, and then the rates are climbing even further beyond the application of the HST.

I read today to you the memo from the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant community care access centre, which has frozen support for people who need more than 60 hours a month. I don’t mean it has frozen the support at 60 hours; I mean it’s going to deny support if you need 60 hours or more. These people, then, are stuck in the hospital. Good government? Good grief. Folks, a whole lot of them seniors, stuck in hospital wards that are understaffed, disoriented, outside of their own homes, when for two hours a day of community support they could be in their own homes.

We know what happens in hospitals. People do get sick in hospitals. Hospitals are full of diseases and germs, notwithstanding how hard the staff work, whether it’s the nursing staff, the nurses’ aides, the personal care workers or people like my dear friend Ray Romano. He’s a cleaner at the Welland hospital; he’s been there a good chunk of time. He’s not a big guy; he’s a little guy, as dedicated as you could be to the hospital, and still, after 15 or 16 years at least, I’m sure, part-time staff. Some weeks he gets 30 hours, and some weeks he gets 25. His wonderful wife works at the Tim Hortons over on Prince Charles Drive, on her feet all day. They’ve raised two pretty good kids. They’ve worked hard doing it. Ray, you see, has to pay his own electricity bills. He’s a tenant. He’s a good man. He has to pay his own electricity; he’s going to have to pay his own heating bills.

And people ain’t seen nothing yet. You see, most families can turn down or turn off their air conditioner. Down where I come from, some folks have those big central air conditioning units. Most people, like me—I have a unit in the bedroom and one downstairs in what I

call a den. The one downstairs, I almost never turn on. In the bedroom, you turn it on for a few hours, cool the bedroom down before you go to bed, and then you turn it off. That's how folks live where I come from. I don't know about you, Speaker, but where I come from, folks already know how to conserve electricity. It's about the money. It's about affordability. I don't know how you grew up, but down where I grew up, it was, "What's the matter with you? Are you going to heat the whole outdoors?" and a crack against the back of the head: "Turn the light off when you leave a room."

I don't think that's unique to Niagara region or folks down in Welland. People do that. People have already cut all the fat. Now I've got people like Ray struggling to keep the house heated. And he works; he works hard. His wife works hard. They don't make a whole lot of money. You don't make a whole lot of money slinging coffee in a Tim Hortons, and you don't make a whole lot of money with a Niagara Health System hospital operation that has a labour relations policy that dates back to not the last century, but now the century before that.

Good government? This is a government that is forcing people who are recovering from illnesses or surgery to stay in—what is it?—\$400-, \$500-, or \$600-a-day hospital beds, and becoming bed blockers in the course of doing that rather than allowing them two hours a day of home care. That could be anything from a personal support worker to help with bathing, to help with a little bit of food preparation, to a nurse preparing—what do they call it?—a dressing after surgery or looking at a wound and making sure that it's healing properly, or clipping toenails. Do you know how important that is for seniors, especially diabetic seniors? This is serious stuff. As I understand it, if you're clipping toenails and you're diabetic, and you cut into yourself and get an infection, you run the risk of being an amputee.

1530

Good government, when it's denying home care—modest levels of home care; even two hours a day—to folks in this province? It's disgusting. It's revolting. It's shameful. It's sad. There's nothing to be proud of. Let me tell you, Ontarians know, because if you're not one of these folks who need that home care, you're their son or daughter or their grandson or granddaughter, or a neighbour—who cares. Good government: It has been a long time since we've seen good government here in the province of Ontario.

At the market, people are talking about electricity prices; HST; lineups, still, in health care. People are starting to tune in to the fact that this government, the McGuinty government, delisted chiropractic. People didn't think about it when it happened, but now when somebody wrenches a back, they go to the chiropractor, which is a nice, good, effective, non-intrusive therapy if that's what's recommended.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Keeps some people working, the chiropractor.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It keeps folks working; it keeps folk mobile. It keeps grandmas being able to hold the

grandkids or moms or dads being able to play ball with the kids. Then they find out that the chiropractic isn't funded; they've got to pay.

Eye examinations: I talked to a woman the other day who had delayed going to the optometrist, and then was shocked and awed and horrified to discover that she had to pay for it because she hadn't brought the means with her to do it.

This government has delisted medical procedures that are essential to the welfare, livelihood and well-being of Ontarians, young and old, and it talks about good government.

Friday night, we went over to the Croatian National Home, Hrvatski Dom, where the Canadian Slovak League, Branch 23, was having its 70th anniversary dinner. Branislav Galat, a dear friend whom I love dearly and who is the president of Branch 23, and his wife, Margita Galat, were there. Branislav was in his tuxedo; if he'd only told me, I would have found one somewhere, I'm sure. If I had to rent one out, I would have found it.

It was a delight. I'm talking to folks there. There's several hundred people in the room, and of course, Malcolm Allen and I made sure we talked to every single person in that room. It's the way we do things, down where I come from. I saw hard-working folks; I saw folks—as I said, there were folks there—there were young people that I—well, they're my age. There were people whom I grew up with as a youngster and there were people there who literally far more insisted they had changed my diapers when I was a baby than they actually had, but God bless. There were people there who, as adults, knew me as a little kid. There were babas and didos and hard-working people. Most of them think that this government has a lot of apologizing to do before it can talk about good government.

I've got to tell you, the folks I was with at the Croatian National Home, at the 70th anniversary of Branch 23 of the Canadian Slovak League in Welland—Slovaks have been coming to North America since the 1870s, 1880s, 1890s. My great-grandfather was one of them. But they didn't come to Canada; they went to Pennsylvania, where the coal mines were, and the refineries and the steel mills. In Welland, the first Slovaks apparently came around 1923. My grandparents came there five or six years later, just in time for the Depression, lucky guys.

But I know these people. They're like so many of the immigrant communities; I can call them "new Canadian" communities. They're as patriotic a Canadian, more patriotic a Canadian, as you're going to tend to find. They've worked hard all of their lives, they've sacrificed so much and they've built things. I've told you this before: They built things. They built schools, hospitals and churches. I'm going to talk about some of those churches, because I was in those churches on Sunday. They built churches and they built community halls, and they made sure that their kids had a better life than they did. By the time you got to, if not the second then surely the third generation, those kids had university and college educations, professional degrees and Ph.D.s. They were

professors in university and engineers and doctors and, yes, some of them lawyers.

This is what they get? This is what those folks get from Mr. McGuinty and his Liberal government? They get unaffordable electricity rates and home heating costs that are going to blow the roof off. They get an HST, a new tax, after the Premier, when he was campaigning, promised—I recall him promising—no new taxes.

This government has succumbed to outright grantism. Grantism permeates every single issue that this government promotes and advocates, and that's nothing for this grantist government to be proud of. Grantism, Speaker, grantism. It's not a proud day in the province of Ontario when a government that's overwhelmed by its own grantism can introduce a bill called An Act to promote good government.

Folks I'm talking to are part of that 86% of Ontarians who say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. Those are the folks I was talking to this weekend. I don't know what folks you were talking to.

Because, you see, on Sunday, after we were at the Slovak Hall, we went over to Trappers with that young woman I told you about. Ms. Tellier's granddaughter was headed off to Australia, so Malcolm Allen gave her a Canadian flag and I gave her an Ontario flag. Malcolm Allen, the federal member of Parliament, gave her some Canada pins, and we said hi to the folks, and the young woman seemed rather pleased. On Sunday morning, we went to mass over at St. John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church. That's over on Second Avenue. That's a historic church; that's the Byzantine church. It's my church, although I belong to the Ukrainian-Greek Catholic church. But this is the Hungarian-Greek Catholic church of the Hungarian community in Welland, who are of the Byzantine Catholic faith. It was a beautiful mass by Father Nick Deak, Father Deacon Laszlo Marozsan and Monsignor John Girhiny from Burlington, again, all of these long-time friends—and young Father Deacon Tibor Turi from Brampton, with his wonderful wife and two great kids.

Of course, you don't go to a two-hour mass with the Hungarian-Greek Catholics without being fed for at least two hours afterwards. So we went downstairs in the small hall underneath this great church, and there were a few hundred people there. Again, Malcolm Allen and I made sure we said hello to every one of them and spent some time listening to what they had to say.

There was a whole big contingent from St Michael's Hungarian Greek-Catholic Church in Hamilton. They came just to see Father Nicholas Deak, and the great thing about Father Deak and Father Marozsan is that they were worker-priests, which is a great tradition, especially in the Greek Catholic, Byzantine Catholic rite. They both worked at General Motors and became priests—and, of course, these are married priests. They have children and families, but they became priests while they were workers. Father—Monsignor Girhiny now, as well, is a worker-priest. And again, they had a little different

perspective because they worked in the factories, in the mills, and they've worked side by side with working women and working men and they saw the tragedies that these same working people endured and underwent and just survived.

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It was a great lunch. I stopped into the kitchen, of course, to say hello to, inevitably, the ladies. There was one man there, but it was the ladies. Many of them were mature, a few with the kerchiefs on. We had pork garlic sausage, homemade Hungarian, and the rice sausage—rice and a little bit of innards; nothing wrong with that—and of course some roasted chicken and salad. I did decline the dessert.

That was an opportunity for me to reflect on this piece of legislation, An Act to promote good government. You know, although I'm not sure I speak for every one of them, I've got a feeling that a whole lot of them don't believe that they've been served by good government to date, not under this Liberal regime consumed by grantism.

Sunday night we went over to the St. Kevin's parish church, the Roman Catholic church, because of course Sunday was a great day for all Catholics because Brother André of Montreal was canonized. He achieved sainthood. St. Kevin's parish is served by the Holy Cross fathers. I attended that mass as well, along with Malcolm. Peggy is very good at making sure that we attend the mass. She's a very good Catholic. That mass was conducted by Father James Mulligan, whom I've known for many, many years—the pastor at St. Kevin's—and by his assistant pastor, Father Norm Bordage.

That parish is very strongly committed to social justice. Young Paul Turner is a teacher at Notre Dame and is very strong in the anti-poverty movement and the churches, and Joe Barkovich is there. He's an editor at the Tribune, but he's very active in the church and in the anti-poverty movement. But of course, after we had the mass and we knelt and prayed and knelt and prayed—you may not understand, Speaker; these are Catholics. There's an awful lot of kneeling in the Catholic church. You've got those little things you flip over, the kneelers, and you're grateful for them. Of course, as you get older, you cheat. You put your knees down and rest your butt on the edge of the pew. That's true, isn't it?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've seen it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He says.

Unless somebody is looking at you on a direct profile like this, they can't tell you're doing it. You look as devoted as anybody else.

I went downstairs and talked to a lot of folks there. Again, it was a wonderful mixture, because there were a lot of mature folks, but then a huge contingent of Notre Dame High School students who were serving. Of course we had lasagne—the Catholic Women's League prepared the supper—and pork cutlets and potatoes and a chickpea and bean salad. It was tremendous. And desserts, but again I declined those for the obvious reasons. But I talked to folks there, and I talked to many folks whom I

have known, heck, for 20, 30, 40, 50 years. Again, I don't speak for all of them; I'm sure of it. Do you know what folks talked to me about? I don't think they believe they're being served by good government either.

You see, it would be a different thing if I could come here and say "Well, this bill solves it." We'd say, "Well, finally, finally, finally the bill is going to address the problems." But it doesn't. This doesn't have anything to do with good government. Please. Before anybody stands up and starts to get snarly about, "Oh, read the bill," I've read the bill, and I've read it over and over again, looking for the little kernel of something that makes for better government. Does the bill correct some oversights in various pieces of legislation? Well, sure it does. The amendments to the Travel Industry Act, we support. What does it do? I'll tell you what it does. The reason this is important is because this is what's covered by the insurance that you buy when you buy your travel—because it's very important. If you buy an airline ticket, as I understand it, off the Internet, you're at risk if that airline folds, and they do from time to time. But if you buy it through a travel agent, that travel agent—remember, we had the scandal here in Ontario a few years ago when one of the largest, longest-standing agencies that sells packages went under, leaving people stranded. Ontarians—their government, the McGuinty government, had done nothing to protect them. The McGuinty government knew that that particular package retailer was in trouble but kept silent. Sometimes silence can be akin to a crime. Families, little kids, people in Mexico, people stranded; they didn't have money, they didn't have cash, they'd run out of American—travellers' cheques; not necessarily American Express.

Here, the current provision in terms of defining "travel services" says, "transportation or sleeping accommodation for the use of a traveller, tourist or sightseer." The amendment expands it to say, "or other services combined with that transportation or sleeping accommodation."

I don't know. I suppose that could mean guide services, when you pay in advance for a guide to take you through Rome or wherever it is you happen to be going; a guide service wherever it is you're inclined to go.

So, fine. Heck, if the minister had brought forward a bill like that, we would have passed it on the nod, I'm sure. Give us a couple of days to make sure there's nothing sneaky in there, because this grantist government can sure be sneaky sometimes. But no big deal; not offensive.

Why, I heard the Attorney General talk about the amendments to the Justices of the Peace Act. The existing provisions in the Justices of the Peace Act say that there will be an annual advertisement for JPs in each region and that it shall accept applications for JPs on an ongoing basis, and now the amendment says that advertising shall happen on the request of the Attorney General. That seems, in and of itself, innocuous enough, but why at the request of the Attorney General? Why doesn't the advisory committee that performs this

function have the power to determine when there's a vacancy and the power to determine when there will be advertising? Think about it.

Do we risk restoring some patronage, some nepotism to the JP appointment process by giving the Attorney General the exclusive authority to decide when there will be advertising for a JP with respect to a vacancy? What this also does—let's be careful, and I say this to the parliamentary assistant as well. We know that in this province we still run with a shortage of qualified, competent and professional justices of the peace. This provision will allow the Attorney General to strangle the supply—parliamentary assistant, please. This provision will allow the Attorney General to artificially strangle the supply of JPs should his or her budget not allow it.

Does it give you pause? Does it give you some concern? Does it make you think that maybe this provision isn't as benign as the amendment to the Travel Industry Act? You can't hire JPs without an ad, and the Attorney General could simply, even with a vacancy, say, "Too bad, so sad. I'm glad"—all quotes attributed to the Attorney General—"and you won't advertise until I say so" or, more realistically, until the Premier's office says so, "or until one of our political friends becomes available for a patronage soft landing." It's like Red Rose tea: "Only in Canada, you say?" Well, only in Ontario.

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I don't agree with that amendment. I agree that there should only be advertisements when there's a vacancy, but it's my position that the advisory committee should be in the position to determine when there's a vacancy and when that advertising should proceed; otherwise the Attorney General will have political control over the supply of justices of the peace—and that's wrong. That's not right; it's wrong. And it doesn't address the ongoing concern about shortages of JPs, a concern that the Attorney General has attempted to address. Look, I give him credit for trying, but I know what he's up against. He has to go cap in hand to Management Board—cap in hand—begging for a few bucks. And you've got a government now that's in a panic, that's in a tailspin.

Let me show you how panicky they are. They had their little confab this weekend, down at the posh Sheraton Centre, and one of the keynote speakers was a fellow called Kerwin Swint, unknown to many. Kerwin Swint: a fascinating name in and of itself. He's a professor of political science at Kennesaw State University and he wrote this book called *Mudslingers: The Twenty-Five Dirtiest Political Campaigns of All Time*. I suspect he was a delightful speaker. Indeed, I read the book the other night. I commend it to people: *Mudslingers: The Twenty-Five Dirtiest Political Campaigns of All Time*, being featured at the Liberal confab this weekend past down at the Sheraton Centre.

I read the book. There's nothing in the book that tells you how to protect yourself from a mudslinging campaign. There's nothing in this book that tells you how to defend yourself or deflect a mudslinging campaign. This is a primer. The preface could have been written by

George Smitherman; in fact, the text could have been written by George Smitherman. Talk about mudslinging, the 25 dirtiest political campaigns of all time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That would be the king of mudslinging.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: That's why he's doing so well.

Mr. Peter Kormos: These gentlemen interject, both of them, to their credit.

I found it remarkable and telling that this Liberal confab down at the Sheraton Centre—it's always been in that hotel, often. They have a little Shopsy's there. It's as close to Shopsy's as you're going to get.

Let's talk about the provisions of this bill, Bill 110. It has several provisions that relieve the Lieutenant Governor in Council of responsibility—I almost said liability, because responsibility means liability—for making regulations and extends them to the minister. Very dangerous stuff. We don't have to go far to reflect on the notorious—the now internationally notorious—G20 McGuinty regulation; the one that was misrepresented to the police, the public and, I say, to his own caucus. And that's a regulation that was passed by cabinet. We still haven't heard the whole story; we probably never will hear the whole story until there is a public inquiry. But I suspect, I just suspect, that Ontario Ombudsman André Marin, who I know has many fans in the government benches—

Mr. Michael Prue: Particularly the House leader.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Prue interjects.

I know that Ombudsman André Marin, who is a pretty smart guy—I'm impressed by his intellect, I tell you; I always have been. He's a very capable lawyer. I suspect, although he recognizes that his jurisdiction is relatively modest, that he will do whatever he can to find out how the G20 regulation could have happened.

This is from the sublime to the ridiculous, when I read in this morning's paper that a Constable Adam Josephs, known colloquially as "Officer Bubbles," is suing somebody for libel and slander, \$1.2-million defamation lawsuit against the website that had cartoons of him, along with the YouTube of him. I watched the YouTube. I hadn't seen the YouTube before. Here's a very young, thin, casually dressed, nouveau hippie blowing bubbles as the cops are standing there in this line outside, I presume, the detention centre. This guy—I don't know if he's all steroided up or not, but he's got the arms crossed—you know how you cross your arms so you get the guns big, right? At least as teenagers, it was important that you put both hands underneath the biceps and you pound them out. So here's this guy, Officer Bubbles, with the guns up and he's standing there, and this sweet young woman is blowing bubbles. It was so reminiscent—you and I will remember; well, I don't remember the 1960s that well, but I've seen photos. But it was that whole era of peace and love and flowers.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski has the same problem I have about recalling the 1960s.

Go ahead, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd just remind the member from Welland to occasionally at least come back to the title of the bill, "good government."

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, I appreciate the direction and guidance. I've been speaking about the absence of good government for 40 minutes now.

Was it good government that gave us the G20 regulation that caused—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The parliamentary assistant interjects.

Was it good government that created that wacky, weird regulation, and was it good government—and I'm being very careful about language; I'm not accusing any given person of doing this—to mislead the police, the public and the members of this Legislature about the effect of that legislation? Was it good government to introduce that regulation secretly, resulting in the arrests of at least hundreds, if not thousands, of people, most of whom have had charges withdrawn and most of whom weren't even charged in the first place? Is that good government?

Officer Bubbles: Jeez, shame on you. Man it up a little bit, will you? Jeez. Suing for defamation. I saw that YouTube, and trust me, it's not defamation. He looks like a damn fool, and he's taken on by a skinny young woman, a young teenaged woman, and he looks like a dupa. That's what he looks like.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Dupa." We know that one.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Good God. And the guy thinks he's helping his career by having that stuff publicized, when the photos are being broadcast? Is he really helping his manly image? He's a real Irish Spring kind of guy, I suppose, huh? Jeez.

I met a whole lot of the cops who were out there during the G20 weekend, a whole bunch of women and men from Niagara region who recognized me and talked to me. The cops followed orders. We know that. The cops followed what they were told was the law, but from time to time, you get one who's just a head-shaker. I can just imagine the stuff that's being posted on Officer Bubbles's locker, right? The mockery—this guy's going to be off on—what do they call it?—harassment leave or stress leave. You could write "steroid" across his forehead. He'll be off on stress leave because he can't take the ribbing he's taking from his colleagues for being taken on and challenged by a petite young woman blowing bubbles.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: They're buying him panties, and they're not even the right size.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member notes.

That's not good government. This Liberal confab wasn't an exercise in good government. It was an exercise in flight. It was an exercise in circling the wagons. It was an exercise in fear. You could smell it outside the Sheraton Centre. It was an exercise in, "If you can't fight fair and win, well then fight dirty and still lose."

We've seen that agenda being played out in the Legislature already this morning. We see ministers like the Minister of Energy reading his script—and it's so transparent. I mean, be a little more subtle. You're paying big bucks for this stuff.

Quite frankly, you're beginning the negative stuff far too early; you're beginning at the wrong point. Read the book, for Pete's sake. Don't just pay the guy 20 Gs or however much he earned to come here and deliver his speech. Read the book and the admonition that "Attacking one's opponent usually comes later in a campaign, after a candidate has had a chance to establish his image with the voters first." Your image, the Liberal image, is already beyond tarnished; it's blackened. All of those curly copper scouring pads and all the elbow grease in the world ain't going to take the tarnish away from this government. Here's the author saying, "Attacking one's opponent usually comes later in a campaign, after a candidate has had a chance to establish his image with the voters first."

Let's suppose the Premier wants to do things his own way. Now, that's what got them into the trouble in the first place. I just find it bizarre, though, because when you try to pull those stunts, the public doesn't find it particularly tasteful.

Again, it's the snarl of a dog who's blind and limp and who can't control its bladder, who can't hunt anymore.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's just making noise.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's the snarl of a dog who's just making noise, because the dog knows that its time is near and it might as well get one more good growl out of life because, Lord knows, there ain't any other pleasures it's going to have. That's what the noise is coming from this government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Seems that way.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't know. I suppose in their caucus meetings, the Premier speaks to the caucus and reassures them that the poll saying that 76% of respondents would like to see another party in power is just a snapshot. All of a sudden, these kinds of polls—when they're the other way around become telltale directions and winners—"This is just a snapshot, folks. Don't get spooked by it." I don't know. I haven't been there, but I suspect the Premier is saying something like that in caucus: "Don't be spooked by it."

The other thing the Premier and the mandarins are saying is "Here's the script; stick to it." The mandarins are writing the scripts. We see cabinet ministers using those scripts. The mandarins are saying, "Don't worry."

Don't worry? Please. The Liberal backbenchers are growing really worried. "Trust me; I'm worried," is what Liberal backbenchers are saying. I've got a feeling—I don't know for a fact—that some of them don't particularly like going home on the weekend. I've got a feeling that when they go home, they roll a boulder in front of the door and say, "Honey, if that phone rings, don't answer it." I've got that feeling. I'm not sure; I don't know this for a fact.

I've got a feeling that they're being told, "Look, governments after their second term always have trouble. This is cyclical stuff." I've got a feeling they're being told that. "But don't worry. Look, we're going to have to work really hard, and we're going to have to do some good stuff, but we can win back the voters."

With this? With Bill 110? Give me a break. You couldn't win a kewpie doll at a fixed carnival game with this bill. This is pathetic stuff. You deliver this as good government? If you called it an omnibus bill to clean up certain pieces of legislation, we'd live with it.

You know what I also find distasteful? That as a result of this weekend's confab, which I presume was about the Liberals trying, amongst other things, to rebrand themselves, to polish up the image, to get a facelift—"We'll give you a new suit of clothes"—and what comes out of that? What's the biggest news that comes out of that? The quiet leadership race.

The front-runner: the Attorney General.

The transportation minister, Kath—you know who she is. I have a great deal of respect for her. She'd be a formidable leader. Far more useful to have her into the next election than as leader of a third party after the election. She may not want to be the leader after the next election.

Dwight Duncan—oh, sorry; the Minister of Finance—heir apparent? I don't think so. Maybe in his mind. Certainly not in his colleague the Minister of Economic Development's mind. She'll have something to say about that.

The health minister: a powerful person in the Liberal Party, well-connected.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: popular with the party's youth wing, at the age of 49. You guys have got problems if that's your youth guy. Think about it, come on.

A more viable contender is the environmental minister, who perceives himself as a pretty slick guy. He doesn't hesitate to let his colleagues know it, I'm sure of that.

Liberal backbenchers laugh. Sh; stop that. You're not being helpful to your own careers.

And then the former health minister, the Don Valley East MPP: wishful thinking. I don't know what mama did to get that into this article, but—and then, of course, the former Attorney General, who is still youthful and who has undergone a conversion. I read the Toronto Life article about him.

I don't for the life of me know or understand why the member for Ottawa Centre was omitted. There's a young, bright member of the caucus. I have no idea why he wouldn't be on this short list of potential leadership people, but I do know this: that caucus is just a cauldron a-boiling. There's rumours and there's suggestions and there's innuendo and there's gossip and whispering in the hallways, and everybody there knows something from a trusted source. "I know for a fact that a, b or c."

It's like the buzz that hovers before a cabinet shuffle, and there is one more shuffle coming, because, you see, a

government in crisis like this needs a safe cabinet. It needs cabinet ministers who will toe the line. It can't risk a cabinet minister who goes rogue, who dares to think for himself or herself, or a cabinet minister who, for instance, would say at cabinet, "Are you guys crazy with this G20 regulation? It's a disgrace, and it's not going to achieve any good result."

The other interesting opportunity the government had here was to breathe some life, some backbone into its Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. That sad, pathetic shell of a ministry, a ministry in name only—does it have any staff, or is it all the automatic voice telephone machinery? Because there's not a whole lot of consumer protection that's coming out of this government. People are getting ripped off left and right. People are getting ripped off by unscrupulous roofers, for instance: guys like Ed Parent down in Welland, who should be in jail for what he does to his customers. One customer, around eight years ago, paid to have his roof removed on an old house. The customer believed that you strip a roof down and re-roof it. You don't put shingles on top of shingles. Again, that's the way we do things down in Welland. He was assured that that was going to be done. Eight years later the roof started to rot. He paid a good price. Ed Parent comes around again and says, "Your roof needs re-roofing." The guy says, "Yes, I know; look at it. But you only roofed it eight years ago." "Well, no, but you've got the trees and the sun and"—okay. The fellow said, "Okay, strip it off again." "No, no, I don't want to strip it off. Just roof over it." The fellow became suspicious, Ed Parent saying he doesn't want to strip it off.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Too much to strip off.

Mr. Peter Kormos: So he hired another roofer. Well, this fellow darn near swallowed his bubble gum when they do roofer stripping and in the first three feet, he's stripping down to bare wood but then from three feet on up, he's hitting two previous layers of asphalt, plus cedar from when the house was built 100 years ago. No wonder Eddie Parent didn't want to strip the roof: because it would have revealed that he didn't strip the roof in the first place.

This government doesn't regulate people like roofers. When you hire a plumber, for instance, for a new furnace, you've got a plumber who's a tradesperson, and if you live in Welland, we have master plumbers, right? They are city-licensed. Not all municipalities have that. I use the Pietzes, Bob and Rob Pietz from down on Niagara Street. I'd trust them with my life. They've served me well. They've never ripped anybody off.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Water still running downhill?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, no, they do my heating and water tank. I use young Marc Krizon for my plumber. I've known Marc since he was just a kid, but he's not a kid any more. He's been doing my plumbing for a good number of years.

So where's the regulation of high-priced services like roofing?

Let me tell you about the Bussi family.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Eddie Parent send you a Christmas card?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Eddie Parent should be in jail. At least he'd get free franking privileges if he was in jail.

Let me tell you what happened to the Bussi family. The bill purports to amend the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services Act. It is called the bill to create good government, so one would think, then, that there would be some protection for new home buyers. The Bussi family—Dino and Jen Bussi; three kids: Eric, six; and twin girls, Megan and Kaitlyn, both three—went to a homebuilder called Randy Gill, Heritage Homes. This guy should be doing pen time. It's on Maple Street in St. Catharines, Randy Gill, Heritage Homes. They contracted with him to build a house. What happened is that, in building a house, Gill had asked for advances as the house was progressing in terms of the stages; first \$50,000, then another \$50,000. But what the Bussis learned is that they didn't own the property. Gill purports to have gone bankrupt, and the bank owns the property to the tune of a \$200,000 mortgage. Where I come from, that's called fraud. It's like Madoff and those other people running Ponzi schemes. Gill obviously is milking the money that's being paid to him by new home buyers. They're not getting the best legal advice in the world, if they sought any, by virtue of not making sure they had title to the property before they were paying somebody to build a home on it. This homebuilder, this Randy Gill, held himself out as a person of great reputation. These people are probably SOL.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, these guys hold themselves out as a great government.

Mr. Peter Kormos: This bill is as close as they get to saying they're going to create good government, and there's nothing in here that protects the Bussi family from unscrupulous builders, outright fraud artists. If the police can—who knows what they'll do with an investigation. Police services are so stressed and short of officers that doing a fraud investigation, because it's so time-consuming, gets put on the backburner. They've got crimes against persons that they have to deal with as higher priorities.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they're busy preventing a bubble attack.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ha, the member notes. There's only one "Officer Bubbles." I can just see it: "Oh, the bubble! Oh, another bubble! Oh, no! A bubble in the groin! That hurt."

Mr. Paul Miller: That was two bubbles.

Mr. Peter Kormos: What's the matter with this guy? What's his name, Officer Bubbles? What is his name? Constable Adam Josephs. "Oh, you got me right in the heart with a bubble." He's a silly guy. That he takes himself seriously, that he exposes himself to this much more mockery—the guy is a laughingstock now. He will be—think about it, Speaker. YouTube has just compounded its distribution, like a hundredfold. So if folks want to see it: youtube.ca. Type in "Officer Bubbles," that's all—maybe "Officer Bubbles, G20"—and watch

Officer Bubbles ducking and dodging. It's like one of those cowboy movies. The guy's down below the desk, shooting, and it's bubbles coming over at him.

Member for Renfrew, do you have anything to say about this?

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the member from Welland: You have me speechless. My eyes are tearing up. My tear ducts are working.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He responds. So we near the end. *Interjection.*

Mr. Peter Kormos: You never can tell. Look, he may be off on a claim now: "Honest to God, Chief, the bubble hit me right in the thigh and I can't walk anymore. I can't move that leg."

Mr. Paul Miller: He's been bubble-ized.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yeah.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member only has a few minutes left. I'd ask him to come back to Bill 110, good government. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I tried to talk about good government, but the sadness and the tragedy is so overwhelming that all we can do is perhaps but laugh. This bill doesn't create good government. It doesn't restore it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It doesn't even encourage it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The bill doesn't even encourage it. It doesn't facilitate it. It doesn't pretend to create it. In fact, it can propose some very dangerous propositions.

I don't blame the parliamentary assistant. I don't blame him. He's doing what he's got to do, and I understand that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He does what he's told.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, he does.

I know that—look, the AG's going to skedaddle, and the PA is going to be left with all the heavy lifting. He's going to have to do all the apologizing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The explaining.

Mr. Peter Kormos: All the explaining. And for the life of me—

Mr. Michael Prue: He just has to get elected a few more times and he might even be in cabinet.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, no. Mr. Zimmer may well find—I'm sorry. The member for Willowdale may well find himself elected and he will be a critic of some ministry. I would commend him as an AG critic or a justice critic. It'll be a small caucus, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll certainly find out what he thinks about good government bills and briefings after that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It'll be a small caucus.

Let's talk about briefings—yes, briefings—because that was raised. What has been spoken to with respect to briefings is true. The bureaucrats come, and they're great people, because I've known them—most of us have—for a long, long time now, so we know each other. We've got relationships. But along comes some little bag-holder, bag-carrier—

Interjection: From the ministry.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes. Let's see: a ministry burp-catcher. Along comes a minister's burp-catcher, and she

sits there. I say, "Can I ask questions?" She says, "Don't answer that." She thinks she's Perry Mason or something. She's been watching too much—"Don't answer that."

And finally, this is how—sorry, folks. You say, "Look, sorry, sir or miss. If you keep doing that, I'm going to have to ask you to leave. This is my briefing, not yours." "But you can't do that." "Yes, I can. It's my briefing, not yours." We've already had that dealt with by a Speaker in this chamber, haven't we? It's been made very, very clear.

I let ministerial staff stay. I have no qualms about them knowing what my concerns are. The minister's going to find out about it sooner or later. Let the minister know. As a matter of fact, one ministry here was very co-operative when we were talking about an issue in a bill the other day around the reporting by pharmacists and doctors. The parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, heard my concerns during second reading debate. She very thoroughly and properly went and got information from the ministry staff and spoke to the concerns that I had raised. Again, we're going to wait for committee now, but that was the responsible thing. I have no secrets.

But, no, you tell those little ministry staffers, the little burp-catchers, to either be quiet and pay attention—"you might learn something"—or you're going to be asked to leave, and you will leave, and the bureaucracy will stay here.

So there we are. I so regret having to—not fold my tent, because I'll be back, but end this. I look forward, of course, with great eagerness and delight, to the questions and comments that I'm sure will be profound and incisive.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: Here are some observations, having listened to the comments from both opposition parties. I had to note, Speaker, that you made, by my count, six—I might have missed one; it might have been seven—interventions to the opposition, admonishing them to stay on topic, to start talking about the bill, not about whatever they were chatting about.

Why did you have to intervene, I asked myself. Why did the Speaker have to intervene? That's because the opposition parties in this debate on good governance were winging it. Why were they winging it? Because they hadn't gone to the briefings. They weren't informed. They did not take the issues raised in this good government bill seriously. That's from opposition parties that are debating in this chamber. They're hoping to form the next government. They're not going to form the next government—just in their mind—until they start thinking seriously about governance issues. Their comments this afternoon lacked in depth, they lacked in substance, but they were, I concede, mildly and wittily entertaining. We passed an hour with a few laughs and a few giggles and so on, but where did they advance any good governance

arguments? Where's the evidence that they've studied this bill? Where's the evidence that they're interested in the good governance issues? Surely, as members of the loyal opposition, that's their primary duty: to be interested in good governance.

Did I see any evidence of that this afternoon in this debate from the opposition parties? No. What it suggests to me is that at the end of the day they're not serious about good government, they're not capable of good government and they're not going to form the next government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about the bill to some extent.

We're supposed to be commenting on the previous speaker's debate. Effectively, just as a reminder, he started off talking about his 1994 Chev S10. I recall him speaking about it quite a few years ago; I think about 14 years ago. I think he used to have a dog Snoopy or a beagle that used to ride in it, that ended up at his parents' place because he was just too much time in Toronto, it wasn't fair to the poor dog.

But to go on, the PA went on and on and on. In his comments he focused on the briefing again. I can tell you that when I was given the honour and privilege to serve as a minister, I held briefings before legislation was introduced in the House. At that time—correct me if I'm wrong because I don't remember if there was a change—it was Mr. Parsons and Ms. Martel who attended. Now, as a minister, I attended the briefing with those individuals and answered questions on behalf of the bill.

I would ask, was the PA there during the briefing for the other caucus members? Probably not. But each of us has to stand on our own. I can effectively see what's happening now as we're setting a tone here so that in the Legislature—and I know the member from Hamilton East will be brought to order at some point by the current government members, who will say, "How can you do that? Because you voted against good government," because of the name of the bill.

There are some components in here, but I would like to get to the real issue that I wanted to talk about on the member's debate, which was the expansion of the Attorney General's ability regarding the JP appointments and those aspects. Individuals in the province of Ontario elect governments to make decisions. As we move forward, appointments are brought forward because they represent a certain perspective, and that's change in government. That's how you change the ship. I'm not so sure—and I'd like to hear from the member some more comments regarding that particular aspect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's always a pleasure to sit here for an hour and be entertained by the member from Welland. But not only are you being entertained; you are actually learning a great many things. He has an uncanny way of using conventional wisdom, of talking about the

ordinary people and events in his riding that brings life to whatever we are debating. However arcane as this bill is, however ethereal it might be, however non-productive it is to the ordinary people of this province, he can still bring something back of those little town hall meetings, those people with whom he grew up and all of the things.

He is a member who obviously listens to his constituents. He is a member who obviously cares a great deal about what they have to say about the current issues at hand. And I would bet that there aren't 10 people in all of Ontario who give too much darn about this bill, because it doesn't really affect all that much.

He is also a member who is extremely well read. I was reading this newspaper on the weekend—

Interjection: Who is?

Mr. Michael Prue:—this member here—he's extremely well read. I was reading the newspaper on the weekend and I was marvelling at this book or at this speaker that the Liberals had at their convention about the 25 dirtiest campaigns in the history of North America. I was thinking, "What a great book. I'm going to have to get a copy that of that book. I want to read that book." Then I discover, when I get here today, that not only does the member from Welland have that book; he's already read it. If you look at it, it's well thumbled; it's already underlined and notated. I think that he really knows of what he speaks, he uses conventional wisdom, and I think the government members opposite ought to listen a great deal more than they do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I, too, enjoy the member from Welland when he has a full hour to expand on any number of issues during his speech. I did hear an interjection somewhere in the vicinity—it's kind of a nice way to spend an hour if you have nothing better to do, so that's always a nice thing in this place. While I was sitting, for most of the hour, listening, at least with one ear, and doing some work on the side—and I had to slip out for a minute or so to take a constituent's call, but I caught him on the TV, so I didn't miss any of the hour.

I enjoyed the opening of his comments, in particular his 1994 Chevy pickup—the member from Oshawa referenced it. I just transferred over my 1998 Buick with a little over 300,000 kilometres—I'm hoping that my son gets another 150,000 off it. It is well serviced, as a six-cylinder, by a GM dealer as well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can have that on a 2008.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: That's what happens when you drive to Renfrew and all the environs; you'll put that on in a matter of weeks rather than a matter of years.

I enjoyed his comments about roofing. I know the experiences of roofing and finding that you have double layers of shingles. When we did a property that we have in the country, a summer place, we began stripping shingles and found we had two layers of 40-year-old shingles on there. It was a real testament to my son and I and some helpers to redo all those things. So I know the type of experience of which he speaks.

The good government bill that we have before us, as the parliamentary assistant indicated in his earliest remarks, as well as the minister, is an opportunity to clean up legislation. It's a process that goes on in many jurisdictions. It brings together information from some seven ministries, I believe, and some 70 amendments to legislation that will make for better governance in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'm so pleased that so many people paid such close attention to what I was saying. Unfortunately, they didn't understand all of the references and the metaphors and the imagery that was being painted. We're very interested in good government; we are, just like 76% of the people in Ontario are. Seventy-six per cent of Ontarians say that they would like to see another party in power. Do you want good government in Ontario? It's not going to be this silly bill that's worth nothing but a few jokes; it's going to be to throw these people, the Liberals, Dalton McGuinty and his gang, out of office, put them where the rump is now, and elect politicians who are committed to their constituents; elect politicians who don't believe in imposing HST on electricity costs; elect politicians who believe that pensions should be stable and secure and that the government has a role to play in doing that; elect people who believe that seniors deserve to be cared for in their own homes rather than being left in hospital beds, as reported by the LHIN from Haldimand, Norfolk, Brantford and Niagara. I tell you, the people of Ontario want good government, and they know that it's not about Bill 110, An Act to promote good government.

I told you, Speaker, that I spent a weekend and a half dwelling on this, pondering it, thinking about it and reflecting on it. Indeed, the government would like to say that I didn't read it. It's the parliamentary assistant who screwed up the reference to the Evidence Act and failed to understand that the only amendments to the Evidence Act were with respect to changing the regulation-making power, whereas his earlier speech—check the Hansard—would have you believe that there were some fundamental changes being made to the Evidence Act that were going to affect courts and lawyers and trials and trial processes. And it's not his fault, because it's a script. The script that is contained in ministerial responses is part of the scripting that's derived from Mudslingers: The Twenty-Five Dirtiest Political Campaigns of All Time. These people hired a \$25,000 guy. They could have bought the book for \$14.95 and been further ahead; they would have got all of the facts.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm really pleased that I have an opportunity to speak to Bill 110. I am going to talk about some of the things that are contained in the bill. Probably I'm going to touch on about three, although

there are roughly 70 items in the bill and it does touch some seven ministries.

The first thing I'm going to talk about is the changes with respect to the Justices of the Peace Act. Now, regularly I have people contact me, contact my office. They have seen advertising in the local media inviting people to put their name forward to be considered as a justice of the peace. Of course, people are busy, but they're interested, and I'm always delighted when I hear that there are people in my riding who are eager to serve. They take a lot of time to put together meaningful applications, and then they submit their applications and they find that in the area where they live there are no vacancies. So they would say that it has been advertised locally and they in good faith put their application in, thinking that if it's advertised, in my case, for example, in the Belleville paper, there must be a vacancy in our region, only to find out that they have applied and that would not be the case.

In the good government bill, Bill 110, the change that is being proposed would remove the requirement for the Attorney General to put advertising in all of the media across Ontario. The Attorney General, he or she, can determine where the advertising should take place. I think this makes a tremendous amount of sense. For my constituents as well, it will be very reassuring to know that when there is advertising for a position of justice of the peace in a local paper, that would indicate there would be a vacancy locally.

You know, when we bring forward good government bills, very often it is because constituents have come to us as members, and I would offer that members from all sides of the House have identified where in legislation there are problems, where there are areas that need to be tidied up, that need to be corrected, that need some attention. That is why we bring forward a good government bill.

I do want to say as well to all of the people in Ontario, who I think are very responsible—they understand the role of government and they understand that from time to time they, too, can have an impact very directly in having us understand how we can ensure that the business of government runs smoothly, that it serves the people of the province. They bring ideas forward about what makes sense to them or doesn't make sense to them. We, in turn, bring that forward to ministers. As a result of the information flowing in that way, we have before us Bill 110, a good government bill, where there are some 70 items that in many cases are the result of this kind of activity that has gone on, where people from our constituency offices have identified how we can make legislation better, stronger and clearer. That is what Bill 110 is doing. I offer as one example the changes to the Justices of the Peace Act, and it makes tremendous sense to me.

I'm also going to move to schedule 3. This is the part of Bill 110 that deals with the Education Act. Really, there are a couple of pieces here that I'm delighted are here. I think that they're very important. Again, I thank

the stakeholders who have us understand how we can continue to work with them, where they may have concerns with legislation that is in place or may not yet be in place and how we can, for their purposes—for our purposes as well—make legislation better and more clear.

I'm going to that part of the act on page iii; it's schedule 3. There are two things that are addressed in this part of the act with respect to the Education Act. There is a very dated part of the act, and it is that part of the act that creates the Essex County French-language Secondary School Act. It's an act that was brought in in 1977. Of course, in the province of Ontario, we have had French-language school boards, I think, since 1998; French-language school boards were established in the province of Ontario. Prior that, and I had the privilege of serving on an elected school board, there were French-language representatives on English-language boards. I do think that it was very important that French-language people gained total responsibility with respect to the governance of their school system, both the French Catholic and French public. In 1998, French-language boards were established in the province of Ontario. There have been wonderful things happening even before 1998 but most definitely since 1998 under the auspices of the French-language boards.

However, when you look at the Education Act, there is a particular part that does reference the Essex County French-language Secondary School Act. It's redundant. It's outdated. That is why we have taken the opportunity in Bill 110 to say it is no longer necessary, and it is removed.

There is another part of the Education Act that is amended in this bill, and it is also with respect to the French language. It is to amend the definition of the French-language instructional unit. It will correct a previous drafting—there was an oversight in the previous drafting of the Education Act—and it will clarify the minister's authority to add terms and conditions to the permission given to school boards to offer French immersion and clarify the intent of the legislation for both English- and French-language school boards. Right now, in the Education Act, a school board that intends to provide French immersion for the students in its board receives that permission from the minister.

You would know, Speaker, that the Education Act has been amended to enable boards to provide full-day kindergarten and extended day programs for children in their boards. This is an initiative that has been very, very positively received by parents, by people in our communities and by school boards. I have to say, I believe that it confirms our government's commitment to do everything that we can to enable students, our youngest learners, to be successful. We know that when they have a good start before they get to grade 1, they are more likely to be successful when they get to school. That is why our government is committed to establishing full-day kindergarten in all schools in Ontario by 2015.

With the introduction of the legislation that will require that, we also introduced in the legislation the ability for boards, where there are enough parents who think they want extended day services—we have included that in the Education Act as well. And, of course, all the programs that I have talked about are available in both the English language and the French language.

1640

The French-language community thought it was very important to clarify with respect to the extended day programs that English-language boards may provide, if there are sufficient numbers. What our French-language partners reminded us was that it was very important to clarify that the programs that would be offered in extended day—that maybe the extension of a French immersion program would not be the French-language program.

For those who meet with our French-language partners, this is a very important issue and did require attention. I thank them very much. I've had many occasions to meet with the representatives of the French-language community with respect to the French-language schools in Ontario. Also, I must say that I hear very regularly from our minister responsible for francophone affairs, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, who is always making sure that I, as minister, and we, as government, are doing all that we can to pay attention to the important issues that are raised by our colleagues in the French-language community.

I think it's important that we have taken this opportunity in Bill 110 to address the very valid concerns that have come to our attention. It is for that reason that we are providing this clarification, that for those English-language boards that would choose to offer French immersion programs for their English-language families—and by the way, I want to say to the boards that do provide that, they obviously have listened to the parent community. I also want to say that, as minister, I hear from many parents whose children have participated and they are so appreciative of the quality of the program that they receive. I think it's appropriate to say today that we thank and congratulate the teachers who have been working so very well to ensure the quality of the program that the children and their families receive.

I think that it's important, though, that we have a very clear understanding in extended day, when families would say that they would look for some French-language instruction or some French-language exposure for children in extended day, it's not part of the French program. The French immersion program and the French-language program are quite distinct, as they should be, and that's what our French-language partners have very effectively reminded us. They've also, in my view, put an excellent case why we need to make this correction and that this is an appropriate time to have that addressed in a good government bill.

Those are two changes that are contained in the bill that will impact the Education Act. It will amend the act. These changes have come to us because the people who

are impacted by what we do have said it is important that we pay attention to these issues. I do want to again thank our French-language stakeholders for the great job that they do both in our schools and in assisting and supporting those in education.

Another part of the good government bill that I think is important to touch on today—I have been listening to the debate over the course of the afternoon and I know that there has been some debate about when members of the opposition and/or the public would have had some input into this document. What I can say to the people in this assembly and the people who are watching is that our government, when we introduce legislation, always takes it to committee. All of our bills go to committee, and it is at committee that we are very eager to hear from opposition members about how bills can be improved. We are also very eager to hear from members of the public, to understand from the average Ontarian how the legislation will impact them and how it can be improved. That continues to be our commitment to the people, which is really, if you consider the history of this place and how it runs, the way we make laws. We don't get together before a bill is introduced and say, "Okay, what do you think should be in it and what do you think should be in it?" and bring it into the House. If that were the case, what purpose would there be for debate? We bring legislation in. It is debated in this very special place. It then leaves this House. It can go to committee. And when I say it can go to committee, our government has a very clear practice of making sure that the people of Ontario have an opportunity to have their say about legislation that is proposed.

There have, however, been governments in this place that have not done that. There have been governments that have brought in bills, brought in bills, brought in bills, with no committee hearings—none. I witnessed that myself. I say that I think the laws we've brought forward since being in government have followed a very time-honoured and traditional pattern, one that works and one that gives what's most important to the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario have had an opportunity to have a say on any proposed piece of legislation.

There's one more point that I want to make with respect to something that I think is very important that people understand is in this bill, another one of the 70-some items that are being addressed in the good government bill. It has to do with the proposed changes with respect to labour and employment. There's one change to the Employment Standards Act that would ensure consistency in the language that's used throughout the document. I know some people would say, "Well, that language, that doesn't really matter to people in my riding." But I would say that, actually, I come to understand that the language in these documents does indeed matter to people in our ridings, particularly when they might be impacted by employment standards. Then the words in the act and their accuracy matter to them a great deal.

I'm looking at page 34 of the act. It's schedule 7, and it is designed—when we talk about good government,

good government relies on good legislation, and good legislation is legislation that is consistent: When people in Ontario read a bill, read a law, it is consistent and makes sense to them.

Another thing with respect to the labour and employment piece of this: Proposed amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act would allow those who receive payments under the act to have greater choice in terms of how those payments would be delivered to them. I can say, with respect to my constituents and those who have had the occasion to speak with me or made the occasion to speak with me about the workplace safety insurance payments that they received, it has from time to time been the case that the legislation that directs payments has not always met their own personal and/or family needs. Here we have, in this bill, taken the time. We've listened, and I'm sure not just in my riding. I'm sure there have been constituents in other ridings who have brought their stories forward, who have identified that the way the legislation is written right now is problematic. It does not enable them to meet their needs. These are benefits that they are entitled to, and yet they're not getting to them in a way that really does benefit them. We thank them very much for bringing this to our attention. We have brought forward our idea as a government on how this can work for them better.

1650

Now, we have debate under way, and I would certainly encourage and invite my colleagues on the other side of the House to pay some close attention to some of these changes. We think that we're doing the right thing here, but if there is a way that we can make the legislation better and stronger, I think that would be important to hear about in this room. Failing in this room, committees are always an excellent place as well to identify how we can ensure that the laws in place for the people of Ontario are working for those people, serving those people and meeting their needs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on the comments made by the Minister of Education. One thing I will give her credit for is that she did speak to the bill, because I didn't hear the parliamentary assistant speak to the bill at all. He just continued to criticize the opposition for missing a briefing at some point. I do want to point out that this is an opportunity for the government, as they talk about their good government bill, to actually—obviously it affects a lot of legislation, there's a lot of people that will be impacted by some of these changes. They may be minor changes, but it's a good opportunity to have decent committee hearings, not something like the Far North Act, where the committee meetings were cancelled in the north. Let's travel the bill and let's show this bill to the people of the province of Ontario, what these changes really mean.

That's the challenge I would ask the minister: Is in fact this bill going to committee and will the bill have an opportunity to be travelled to other parts of the province?

Going back to the Far North Act for a moment, Bill 191, many, many people in northern Ontario are very upset with what happened with that legislation. It was rammed through very, very quickly, and of course the committee hearings in northern Ontario were actually cancelled, and we've had demonstrations on the lawn of Queen's Park since. The member brags about their record on listening to the public. Well, this is a good opportunity. Let's see this bill travel, as we would expect it to, and not have this disastrous example of what happened with the Far North Act, about which, as I said earlier, I've had a number of concerns from aboriginals in my community. I've been in touch with aboriginal communities in northern Ontario. As well, business people in northern Ontario are very, very disappointed in the performance of this government and its actions in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Housekeeping perhaps, and from time to time some pretty dangerous stuff to boot, but for the life of me, I don't understand what any of this has to do with good government.

Is online gambling the right thing or wrong thing to do? Seventy-one per cent: Wrong. Was the HST the right thing or the wrong thing to do? Eighty-one per cent: Wrong. Were eco fees the right thing or wrong thing to do? Seventy-three per cent: Wrong.

You see, people define good government as government that doesn't expose their kids with mommy or daddy's credit card to Internet gambling, the most addictive form of gambling possible. People see good government as government that doesn't impose new taxes—by virtue of an HST—on goods and services that were never taxed before, especially when the leader of the government promised no new taxes in an almost “read my lips” scenario. People in Ontario don't see good government as a government that sneaks up on them from behind and just bites them on the butt with eco fees. The good people of Ontario don't see good government as government that won't listen to seniors when it comes to their concerns, that won't listen to people who are languishing in hospitals ready to be discharged but who can't be because this minister and this government won't fund even two hours a day of home care for them. People don't see it as good government when their heating costs are escalating through the roof. People don't see it as good government when the government is delisting medical health care services. People don't see it as good government when a government creates secret laws in the dark of the night and then misleads the people of Ontario, including police officers and its own backbenchers in the Parliament of Ontario, about the contents of that legislation. People don't see it as good government when you have a government that takes its power for granted, when you've got a government that abuses its power and when you've got a government that treats the people of Ontario with disdain.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The good people of this province see it as good government when you reform their tax system, when you cut their personal taxes, when you make their employers more cost-competitive, when you get rid of an archaic, expensive, obsolete and, by today's standard, stupid method of taxing consumption and replace it with the way the rest of the world does the tax on consumption. People see that as good government.

People see it as good government when you look at your seniors and say, “How can we make your lives better? We can increase your property tax credits. We can give you a tax credit to help you overcome the fact that energy prices are rising everywhere in the world.”

We look at the prices of energy in Ontario, and we say, “Our energy prices in Ontario: How do they compare with Europe—anywhere in Europe?” Ours are way lower. How do they compare with all of the other Great Lakes states, all of the other Midwestern states? Our prices are lower. So we say to ourselves, “Are we spending billions of dollars to renew one of the most essential things that serves Ontario, which is our electricity generating and transmission system?” The answer is no, because we're spending tens of billions of dollars doing it, and we're doing it because it has to be done.

The good people of Ontario look at us and say, “That's good government. That's the kind of thing we're looking for to make sure that in the years 2030, 2040 and 2050 our children and our grandchildren will know that when they plug something into the socket, the lights are going to come on. They'll know that as we renew that system, they'll be good jobs. They know that the construction industry will have something to work on. They know that this is going to be clean energy.

What a good-government bill comes down to is a whole lot of housekeeping and, in this case, a whole lot of good sense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I wanted to mention that I appreciate the minister's comments. She was very direct and to the point and she answered some of the questions that came forward, which means she paid attention to the bill, which is important, and that's how to move forward. When she talked about the Justices of the Peace Act and the changes that came forward, it gave a better understanding for the Legislature on how that works. That's how the chamber should work, in my opinion—that it came forward.

We all take everybody as an honourable member. At least they came forward; one, she paid attention to know that those are the questions I had, and two, she answered them. Quite frankly, that was good to hear, and I think we need a little bit more of that. Also, it stuck to the topic. It was good to see that the content of the bill was there. It answered a lot of questions for a lot of members. So I appreciate that coming forward, and I think a lot more of that debate would be a lot more functional in our House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Education has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I do appreciate the comments that have been made on all sides of the House. Yes, I think that it is an important piece of legislation, and when I say “an important piece,” any time that we can look at the laws of Ontario and understand that they need to be updated and sometimes they need to be corrected, I think that’s a good thing. I think it’s a worthwhile exercise.

I know that there is something being made of the title “good government,” and I do want to offer some comments on that as well, because I was at home on the weekend speaking with my constituents, and my constituents are really happy that their children are doing well in school. They’re doing better. They’re happy that their children are in smaller class sizes.

As a government, I think we’re doing a good job because more students are graduating, and parents are happy to hear that. Parents understand how well their schools are doing because each year they receive a report from the Education Quality and Accountability Office. I think that that’s accountability and that’s part of good government.

In my own community as well, for many years we were advocating for better access to primary care services. We now have a number of family health teams, in the city of Belleville and in the Prince Edward counties centre in north Hastings. People think that is good government when they can access primary care in their community.

1700

So, with respect to good government, I believe that the McGuinty government has been a good government. With respect to the good government bill, I think it is addressing a number of things that need to be changed, amended or corrected, and many of these changes are happening because our constituents—all constituents—have identified where it can be better.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’m pleased to rise this afternoon and spend some time speaking to Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. I’ll just read the explanatory note out of it and then get into some of the reasons why I think the government should explain themselves and why I feel they’re not a good government.

“The bill is part of the government initiative to promote good government.

“The bill amends or repeals a number of acts and revokes a number of regulations. For convenience, the amendments, repeals and revocations are set out in separate schedules. The schedules for each ministry include amendments to and repeals of acts that are administered by the ministry or that affect the ministry. The commencement provisions for each of the schedules are set out in the schedules.”

I always try to read the explanatory note to the best of my ability when I speak to a bill.

It’s amazing that a government that is not very popular right now—this is an apology kind of a bill. There are

people, and there have been some group studies, and websites that consider this to be the worst government in our country. So it’s a good-government bill by Canada’s worst government.

I want to start out on some of the comments—I’m going back to the parliamentary assistant again and how insulting his remarks were to the members of the opposition because we didn’t attend a briefing. I want to point out that one of my colleagues’ executive assistants has already approached me and said that she never went to the briefing because she understood the briefing. She’s trained in the legal field. She understood it, and she was insulted by your remarks that she should have to be at that meeting. She thought it was bad governance to drag a bunch of bureaucrats in to tell her something she already knew. She understood that section of the bill. And I think it’s important that we realize that there are people in the opposition who do clearly understand some of the changes; there are other people who want to take advantage. But the fact of the matter is, in this case, the bill was introduced late.

Because it was constituency week last week, our caucus hasn’t had an opportunity even to caucus this bill yet. We have caucus on Tuesday, so we haven’t even had that chance. We’re very concerned about the fact that in his 20 minutes, or whatever amount of time the parliamentary assistant spoke, he said at least eight or 10 times, even in some of the comments at the end, that we don’t understand the legislation and that we’re too ignorant to learn the legislation because we won’t attend a briefing. I was very offended by that, and I think a number of people in this hall would be as well.

I want to just talk for a second about some of the things the government has done that would indicate that maybe there hasn’t been some good governance. I look back at the last election. It came to my mind today when the member from Sarnia–Lambton read a petition with thousands and thousands of signatures that had been drafted or put forward by a lady, Mrs. Wilma McNeil, in Sarnia–Lambton. Wilma, for 25 years, has been trying to work towards getting Remembrance Day made a statutory holiday because she is so passionate about the fact that we in this country, particularly now with our armed forces around the world and in Afghanistan, have to have pay more attention to the special work they do. And I sort of agree with that.

What I didn’t agree with was the fact that in the last election, because it sounded good, the government brought out something in the middle of winter called Family Day. It has been botched in many, many areas, as you know, because not everybody gets Family Day. It has been good for some businesses, like some of the ski resorts, for example, but other businesses that have to come up with that money each year—as we all know, the winter months are some of the worst months we have for business—have to find that extra money for that Family Day in February. I would have far rather seen the government join in with Mrs. McNeil, make Remembrance Day a statutory holiday and forget about the winter holiday,

which comes at a bad time. I can tell you, I think a lot of people would agree with me.

I want to compliment my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton for bringing this to the floor today and for bringing Wilma's concerns forward as well, because it's all part of the package of statutory holidays and what's good government and what's bad government, that sort of thing.

I wanted to go over for a second and again compliment Wilma. I send her our congratulations for her fine work on that, because Remembrance Day is coming up in a few weeks' time. It's a very, very important date in many of our communities. Just this morning, I wanted to point out that Mr. Aaron Williams from my riding, who is stationed in Afghanistan—just on the weekend, Aaron was promoted to a major position with the Canadian Armed Forces in Afghanistan. I sent him an email and he sent me one back. I just congratulate him for being a great young man and serving our country well in Afghanistan.

It brings us to other things we want to talk about, on the government bragging about good governance. I go back to this G20 stuff. It's unbelievable, the secret legislation that was passed while this House was sitting. This House was sitting. It was a regulatory change. At the same time in my riding, we had a tornado in Midland. You wouldn't believe the press releases that came out from this government on the tornado. The Minister of Municipal Affairs was up there doing an event—I don't know what he looked at. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services made it up. But at the same time this G20 stuff was happening, no one knew anything about it. No one knew they changed the laws for the security; even the police didn't know it. Many of the police officers didn't know it. Certainly, the people who wanted to demonstrate in peace did not know they were breaking the rules. This regulation was passed by this cabinet in a very, very secret manner, and they did not tell the general public about it. I think that's one of the reasons you've seen the two cabinet ministers change positions. The former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I think, was wearing that, and he had to be replaced because there are so many concerns about that.

Then we go over to the government bragging about the consultation process. They talk about the harmonized sales tax. Wow. Nothing worse could have happened to this province this year than the harmonized sales tax taking effect; absolutely. I talked to a golf course owner on Saturday. He owns the Brooklea Golf and Country Club in Midland. He said that this has absolutely been the worst year they have ever had. They've been hit over and over and over again: the pesticides act, the minimum wage bills etc., and now the harmonized sales tax. It is having a very, very negative impact on their operation. They can't attract the same kinds of tournaments, they can't pay the kind of money and they just are not making money.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Do you know what? They can heckle me all they want, but the reality is, we're having a very difficult time in rural Ontario.

I can say, I have attended the plowing match and I've attended four other rural fairs; our leader of our party, Mr. Hudak, came up to one of our fairs. I can tell you, if the government thinks they've got good government right now, you'd better talk to the public. You'd better talk to the people out there, because your popularity is sliding so fast, it's not even funny. It has just absolutely been a disaster, this harmonized sales tax. The reality is, I'm quite sure that there's going to be a change in government next October. I'm quite sure of that.

I know that they want to demonize the opposition leaders. We've seen that with some of the media reports this weekend. That was the intent. Our leader got more media out of the government's Liberal conference—or convention, whatever you want to call it—than the Premier got, because it was nothing more than, "How can we demonize Tim Hudak?" That's what it was all about.

If you're talking about good governance, I'd like to talk a little bit about private members' time. So many good private members' bills come forward here. We spend Thursday afternoons in here, and you just wonder why they never get moved forward.

1710

Take, for example, Norm Miller's bill—and, Madam Speaker, I believe you have also had a bill similar to this in the past—creating spaces for bike lanes or walking lanes etc. But I can tell you that is a very, very positive bill. It's good for tourism, biking industry tourism; it's good for public safety, people saving lives; and it's good for health promotion. I'm hearing it—I'm going to tell you: Mr. Miller, he's just arrived here now. He's my neighbouring MPP—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would remind the member to refer to the member's riding, not to his name.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I just can't remember the name of his riding. I'm sorry.

Interjection: Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Parry Sound-Muskoka; okay. I should have known that. Parry Sound-Muskoka.

I can tell you, if you talk about good government that is a winning bill, because it's not saying to the government, "You must spend all this money at one time." You phase in these roads over a period of time, over a period of years. I give my colleague so much credit for bringing that forward. I'm sure that is a bill that the government should call. And if they want to take the bill, fine; steal his bill and make it a government bill. Let the Minister of Transportation or the Minister of Community Safety bring it in, but I can tell you right now, it's so positive for the citizens of Ontario and right now, it'll probably go nowhere in this session of government. But as far as I'm concerned, it's one of many private member's bills that should be considered.

I would rather be debating Bill 100 today than this Bill 110, this good governance bill, because I think it'll do

more for the citizens of the province of Ontario. Again, I want to compliment my colleague for bringing it forward. I know he's getting tremendous support throughout the province. I know my local medical officer of health, Dr. Charles Gardner, who does Simcoe-Muskoka, absolutely loves the bill. He met with me and he says that he wants to really work on that as well. I've encouraged him to talk to his colleagues as well and other medical officers of health across the province.

Let's go back for a second to the energy policies, which I find to be absolutely amazing. I'm just curious if anybody's had any problems with the solar and wind farms and the agreements the government has actually made, through the Ontario Power Authority, with some of these companies.

I've got to tell you this: We don't have, in my particular area, a wind atlas that would require a lot of wind generation in north Simcoe; however, there are a lot of opportunities for solar farms and solar generation. What's happened is that the Ontario Power Authority made these agreements with certain farmers through these companies. In this one case, it's called Recurrent Energy. I think there are eight farms in my riding that have made agreements with the farmers. The farmers were supposed to keep their mouths shut and sign these deals. They're going to get X number of dollars over 25 years and Recurrent Energy will get the contracts for 80 or 100 acres of these solar panels at a time.

The municipality knows nothing about it. The municipal councillors, as they're running for election right now, are finding out and saying, "Well, what do you mean there's no agreement? We've got nothing to say." People are writing their municipal councillor and they have had absolutely no input into this. We had one public meeting. The guy came from Recurrent Energy and he was basically a snake oil salesman. He said, "You know what? We've reached a deal. We're going to do this. We're going to be wonderful. We're going to do all this," but they weren't answering the questions about property values that have been declining and that sort of thing.

Then I find out now that Recurrent Energy, which, by the way, is based out of California, has been sold to Sharp Corp. out of the Far East. Sharp Corp. bought Recurrent Energy for \$350 million, so basically many of our solar projects in the province of Ontario that are going to be getting 80 cents a kilowatt hour for these huge solar farms are going to be controlled by the Far East, not even our local farmers. Our local farmers are nothing more than landlords.

The question I have for the government is: If you're talking about good government, what's going to happen when these things wear out? Is that going to go back to the municipalities? All they want, all I want to do is—I think the leader of the official opposition is right in saying that there has to be a municipal responsibility in there. There's no way on God's green earth that should have ever been left out.

That's just part of good government: How would a government make a piece of legislation, ram through that

Green Energy Act and then leave these open-ended types of problems out there for the people to absorb—in this case, a lot of people in rural Ontario? I think a lot of people agree with having solar farms. They like the idea. But we do have to have some responsibility for the residents. They have a right to know where these things go. They have a right to know what their obligations and commitments are.

Then we go into things I mentioned earlier in my other comments: Bill 191, the northern Ontario act, the planning act for northern Ontario. We talk about transparency and openness and public hearings, and yet we all know, when we go back to that, what happened there. That's been a disaster with our aboriginal communities across the province. I think the government likes to spin the story that the Minister of Natural Resources visited eight communities and they love her and everything's fine up north. That's what I keep hearing her say in the answers, and I'm not hearing that at all in my community, where I've got two First Nations communities, Beausoleil and the Chippewas of Rama. Both of those communities have approached me and said, "What is happening with this Far North Act? All of our brothers and sisters in northern Ontario are furious about how this has occurred." So again, good governance. I didn't see anything about that in there, and I don't see it in any comments.

Then I go back to my ministry, and I know we talked a little bit today about the JPs; that's part of Bill 110. But I'm still trying to get the government oversight on Bill 115, on the Coroners Act. That still has not been passed, two years later. The date passed. I have a family that I've been working with, the Farlow family, who lost their little girl at Sick Kids. We've had them in the House here. They've been trying for years to find out what happened to their daughter. The government put an oversight council clause in the legislation that we were supposed to have passed so we would see what was happening. It's still not passed, over two years since the bill was proclaimed. It's still not passed and people are wondering why. I'm curious why the Attorney General wouldn't make sure that was done when he's bringing out something like a good governance bill.

We can go on and on and on. The eco tax: Was that good planning?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's gone. It's gone.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They're yelling now, "It's gone," as though they've done some wonderful thing. Who brought it in in the first place, and now you make it sound—in typical Liberal fashion, they think they've done a real favour by dumping something that's been just a tragedy from day one. It was a tragedy.

This eco tax was the sneakiest tax that anyone has ever heard of. It cost another minister his job. I don't know what he's doing now, but they've got another Minister of the Environment. But I'm going to tell you, it's been a complete disaster. They thought they were going to put it off for 90 days and re-evaluate it, and then—you know, they know it's a disaster. My God.

They're grabbing at any kind of a straw they can to try to say they are a good government, but the more they

drop—like fooling around with the sex education curriculum, chocolate milk in the schools, the Oakville power plant—my God. I couldn't believe the minister saying today that there may be no cost to the Oakville power plant. You know what? It's likely going to be \$1 billion, likely around \$1 billion.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Peterborough.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He's only got 11 months left here. Give him some patience. He won't be here much longer, and we're going to have a lot of fun with our new member up there. He's a great guy, that new person we'll bring to Queen's Park.

The reality is, this bill is nothing more than an apology. It's kind of an attempt at apologizing to the citizens of Ontario: "We have been a really bad, bad, bad government and now, you know what? We're going to try to apologize by coming out with a good government bill."

The best thing that could happen to this bill right now is for it to die quickly so that we can get it to committee, because they don't have much more to debate here. They want to get out of here as quickly as possible, and you know what? The reality is that we want to keep debating this. We'll see, on a good government bill, if they time-allocate it, because we'll probably bring lots of people out. All of our members want to speak to this bill. I'm sure all the government members want to speak, but we'll see. It's likely going to be time-allocated. We'll see if that happens.

With that, I know I've brought a lot to the floor today, a lot of positive things for the taxpayers of Ontario, because they realize this is the furthest thing from a good government. This is a bad government bringing forward a bill called a good governance bill.

1720

I appreciate the opportunity to make my comments today. I'll look forward to the comments coming from my colleagues around the room. I can't imagine supporting a bill, personally, although we haven't caucused this, that Canada's worst government has brought forward, calling it a good government bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Simcoe North and what he had to say. I think he has taken some considerable umbrage, and probably rightly so, at the title of this bill. I think if the government was wise and wiser than I hope, they would simply look at this bill and recognize it for what it is: It is a house-keeping bill. If it went under any other name, then we probably would not be raising all the spectres and the things that this government has done wrong and continues to do wrong over the last year or year and a half. The member from Simcoe North is absolutely right. To call this the Good Government Act, 2010, is a misnomer of the highest error.

He is raising a whole bunch other spectres that are happening around Ontario. The people of Ontario really

want to talk about those things. They want to talk about hospitals. They want to talk about the HST. They want to talk about taxation. In some corners, they want to talk about windmills. They want to talk about everything else other than this.

I think what was said earlier was absolutely right. The reason the government gives it this kind of moniker is in the hope that the members, as the member from Simcoe North just said, would vote against the bill so that you can stand up and taunt and you can go on radio shows and everything else and say, "The official opposition is voting against good government." That's why it's called this, and that's what this is all about. This is a bill that is incredibly minor in scope and has been given a title that takes it out of all proportion to what it really is.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I agree with my colleague opposite that this is a technical bill. There's no doubt about it. It changes a number of bills and make 70 amendments to legislation from seven different ministries, so it is technical. It is removing those things that are archaic and moving our province forward. Every once in a while, I suspect that every government has needed to look back at legislation, upgrade it and perhaps delete items that are no longer relevant in the modern world. So, yes, that's exactly what this bill is: a very technical bill.

To the member opposite who just completed his comments, I agree with you on private members' bills. We do have a lot of very good private members' bills. I think he's been here long enough to know the nature of this place and how that system works. I had a very good private member's bill, and I was eight years asking your government of the day to consider it. Five different Ministers of Transportation said no. When we became government, I went to our Premier and said, "What do you think about this bill?" He incorporated it into a government bill, and, oddly enough, two of the former ministers voted in favour of it once they were in opposition. That's how this place operates from time to time. The other three ministers couldn't vote because they were not any longer in this House. Two favoured it after they were out of government.

The member opposite also mentioned clean energy. I know you were talking about solar. We have a lot of wind farms in Chatham-Kent—many, many towers around. The farmers and/or landowners—they don't have to be farmers to have a tower on their property—enjoy the revenue, as mentioned, the same as solar only to a different degree. It brings green energy to the community and also assists our municipality on their tax base.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Simcoe North on his remarks as he took us through Bill 110. I agree, also, with a number of his remarks.

I found it passing strange that the government was for this bill before they were against it. It sounds like some legislation over in the United States that they supported before they found out they were against it.

But anyway, as far as a government bill, this has been a bit of a charade, as he said. It's kind of like a bait-and-switch when we talk about the different aspects of whether it's energy, green energy, this green energy bill.

I spent four days at the plowing match. I also spent four days recently at a local fair in my riding. I would advise the government members that they should get out of Queen's Park, perhaps, and go back to their ridings, or come down to Sarnia–Lambton and see what the people have got to say down there. I spoke to upwards of 20,000 or 30,000 people at that fair, over four days, and those people are not happy with government; they're not happy with the good government bill. They're concerned about issues over green energy. They're concerned over the HST. We had no hearings across the province on the HST. We battled for that; the government said no. The Far North Act, as the member from Simcoe also said—nope, we didn't have any hearings on those. People are unhappy.

How they can stand up in this House and say now that they're going to make recommendations to 15-some ministries and a number of acts as well—why would anyone in this province think that at the end of the day they're going to get good government?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Liberals, apparently, were at what they call an annual general meeting over this past weekend. They're back here in Queen's Park. You'd swear they'd been to one of those Maoist rehabilitation camps, like a year in the countryside, so that they would have to be forced to read the little red book—and it is, as it happens, a little red book—over and over and over again. They walk in and their eyes are glazed. I saw one backbencher blinking “SOS” at me. It's like he's writing me notes saying, “I'm being held captive. Help me.” It's just a remarkable thing to witness.

When the McGuinty Liberal government tells us that we're going to have Internet gambling so that gambling addicts can get addicted at an earlier age, including kids gambling away mom or dad's credit card limit in their bedrooms on the Internet, and so that people who are susceptible to gambling addictions can be exposed to the most addictive form of gambling, that's not good government. When the McGuinty Liberals install not-so-smart—quite frankly, stupid—meters on people's homes across the province, running up a tab of almost \$1.5 billion that those same electricity consumers have to pay for, only to find that those not-so-start stupid meters have driven up the price of their electricity, that's not good government. When this government tells working women and men in this province that it won't support anti-scab legislation, so that we could avoid the dreadful scenarios like up in Sudbury and Nickel Belt of lengthy, lengthy, lengthy labour disputes while management drives scabs over the picket lines, that's not good government. Far from it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Sarnia–Lambton and Welland for their comments. I'm pleased to respond very briefly to a couple of comments.

I want to first of all thank our member. I didn't get a chance in my comments to thank him for his private member's bill—because I'm really passionate about these private members' bills and how good they are. But Bill 78, the surplus food for the food banks, is just an amazing bill. It's getting all kinds of—I think we had petitions at the plowing match. It was just mind-boggling, the number of people who support this. Again, I wish him all the best, and hopefully at some point that will make a lot of sense and will become a bill that will help our agricultural community as well.

But you know what? I'm someone who really likes to keep my bills paid. I don't like debt and all that kind of thing. One of the things that has really been a problem for me is this \$21-billion deficit. If we're talking about good government, let's really talk about just what kind of shape this province is in. Right now, I know through the budget, through their own calculations that we're—I think it took all the Premiers up until Dalton McGuinty, from 1867 to when Dalton McGuinty came in in 2003, all those Premiers and all those governments together, to get the accumulated debt to \$120 billion. Dalton McGuinty will now double it in his term in office. In his eight years, that's what will happen. It may even be beyond that. That's not good government. That's not the kind of government, that's not the kind of management, the transparency we want to hand down to our children and our grandchildren. That's what I find is the worst thing about this government: their inability to manage this economy and this province in a proper manner.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to speak to the Good Government Act, 2010. I have to state at the outset that, having read the act and having looked through the act and trying to see what was contained within it, there was at least one good provision. There is one good provision, and I think that all members of the House will probably agree with it, and that is the only substantive part of the entire act dealing with the section on the Justices of the Peace Act. What is being done within the body of this legislation is the right thing to do. The amendments to the Justices of the Peace Act are designed to change the recruitment process from constant recruitment to one based on current vacancies. In turn, we know that hopefully this will allow for better representation of communities in the end. I am in agreement with that, and I imagine that every single member in this House is in agreement with that section.

But then you look at the rest of the act—and this is where I have to ask what all the debate is about and the rancour that is taking place here and people upset. It's mostly about the title, because nothing else in the act is of any real importance. There are a couple of schedules.

Schedule 6 is amendments to a number of acts administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, but it doesn't really change anything within the ministry at all other than the authority of the minister to administer things that, in the past, had to be taken to cabinet. There are nine other amended acts, but not one contains a substantial policy change.

So here we have a debate about changing the Justices of the Peace Act. In effect, that's the only thing that is in this act that should cause the public, this Parliament or anyone else any concern. It certainly is the right thing to do as far as we can tell. All the rest of it is incredible fluff. There is nothing here that warrants the moniker, the title, the Good Government Act, 2010. Now, I suggested, in what we call around here our two-minute hit, that this is designed so that if members of the opposition come forward in the end and vote against the bill, this will be the subject of radio ads, election ads, taunts in the House and everything else, that members of the opposition have voted against good government.

I'm not going to fall for that trap. I don't think anyone needs to fall for that trap. Certainly, I know my colleagues in the NDP won't be seduced by voting against a bill with this title. But I am asking the government to change the title of the bill. Call it the much ado about nothing act.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: No.

Mr. Michael Prue: Call it the Shakespearean act, then. Call it anything else you want, but don't call it the Good Government Act, because it's not producing good government and it's not producing anything that the people of Ontario care very much about.

The people of this province, if you talk to them and you ask them, "What do you think should be contained in a good government act?", will tell you a whole bunch of things that perhaps the members opposite do not want to hear. They'll talk about the number of people who are jobless and who have very few prospects in this province. People in Ontario know that we have lost 350,000 jobs. Some of them know that this government, in instituting the HST, promised that we were going to get 600,000 new jobs come back. They quoted an obscure economist from Alberta, who suddenly became their very best friend, that this in fact was going to happen.

But many more of them know that this is not happening at all. Many more of them can tell you that last month alone this province lost 27,000 new jobs. We didn't gain 600,000 jobs or a percentage of 600,000 jobs because of the HST; we lost 27,000 new jobs. When you ask economists across the country why Ontario is faring worse than some of the other provinces when it comes to job loss—that was the first thing that I saw in a televised debate and in television scrums with economists talking about why Ontario is doing so poorly at this time.

They raised a number of things, but one of the key factors was the imposition of the HST. That's what people want to talk about in the province. They want to talk about, when they talk about good government, things like that. They want to talk about the fact that almost the

entire manufacturing sector in Ontario has cratered. It is hollowed out. The jobs are falling away. The good money that came with those jobs that sustained families is no longer there. When you lose a manufacturing job that pays 20-plus dollars an hour in Ontario and you go out to look for work, you may be lucky to find something at minimum wage. You may end up with a job—a part-time job at that—at McDonald's or Walmart or some other place that pays minimum wage. But when you lose a manufacturing job, you lose a livelihood, and when you lose it in some communities around Ontario, you lose a great deal.

Go to those towns that have lost manufacturing in a big way. Take a look at smaller-town Ontario or smaller-city Ontario where the jobs have gone and they may never come back, and you see the despair in people's eyes and you see what those towns are going through. Go to northern Ontario and see how bad it is when the mill or the mine shuts down and there's no work left and people are forced to move away, sometimes not even in Ontario itself, not to the neighbouring community, but sometimes out of the province altogether. That's what people want to talk about when they talk about good government.

We believe that this whole idea this government keeps talking about again and again and again in terms of the HST being good for business is a sop to business. It's a whole neo-Liberal idea that is failing not only in this province but in this country and, in fact, around the world. There was a semi-revolution there for a little while in the United States with the election of President Obama, but it appears that the neo-Liberalists are starting to make a comeback with the Tea Party and the right-wing Republicans saying, "Just cut the costs of everything. Cut the costs of government and everything will be fine again." This government here in Ontario unfortunately has bought into some of that argument.

Instead, the people of Ontario are asking for good government. They are asking Liberals and this government here, if you want to put a bill forward saying "the Good Government Act," include some of the following: Why don't you include a buy-in-Ontario policy so that people know that when you buy a car manufactured in Ontario, you are helping your neighbours and promoting the economy of this province. When you buy a car manufactured in some other place, there are only a limited number of jobs that go with it. Buy Ontario is a smart thing to do. Or how about legislation, if you want a good government act, that will make sure that when there are plant closures, as inevitably and always there are, people who worked there, some of them their entire lives, are protected? When a plant closes, the first people who should be protected are the workers, but in fact in Ontario the first people who are protected are the banks. I think we've got something wrong here. We've got something terribly wrong. So that people know if they are about to lose their job, the plant is to close, the town is to go into turmoil, and all those things that are happening—that the first people who should be protected are those who work,

those who have put in the time and the money and their pensions, those who are still owed outstanding severance and other wages when a plant closes down, and not the banks who go in there and seize it all first and the poor people are left with nothing. I think if you wanted a good government bill or a good government act, then it would contain some of that.

1740

How about the whole thing about severance eligibility? People aren't entitled to that because too often banks and loan companies and others are there first. How about the whole issue of pensions? People are crying out for some kind of pension reform. I understand that the Minister of Finance has put in a motion, and he filed it today. He's asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to acknowledge that two thirds of Ontarians don't have a workplace pension and then is asking that the Legislature endorse a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan, CPP.

Is this great government? Is this good governance to ask this Legislature to ask the Parliament of Canada to do something because we feel so unempowered that we can't do anything ourselves? That's the answer of this government. If you want a Good Government Act, then you have to be prepared to provide good government, not to put forward a non-binding resolution that doesn't do anything except perhaps make the Minister of Finance feel that he is finally doing something on this file. This is not good government, and it's certainly what the people of Ontario have been asking all of us to do.

They've also been asking us to eliminate the HST, particularly on hydro. Those bills are starting to become excessive and troublesome to a great many people. I hear every day in this House ministers, the Premier and others stand here and say, "Oh, we've done amazing things. We've helped some people who are pensioners by giving a few little grants around the issue and that's going to solve it all."

The reality is, it's not going to solve it all because most of the people who are hurting are not pensioners. They're ordinary people, and they're squeezed. They're squeezed because times are tough. Some of them have lost one or two jobs within a single family. They're squeezed because they haven't had a decent increase in their wages in years because of the economy. They're squeezed because other prices, including the costs of education for their children, have gone up. All of a sudden they're finding that what they were hoping to do with their lives is becoming very problematic.

Every day in this Legislature, the leader of the NDP stands in her place and reads letters from ordinary people—these are sent with great conviction by them—about the effects of putting HST on their hydro bills, the effects of putting HST on their home heating bills, the effects of putting HST on their gasoline and oil for their motor car, and how it is affecting them.

We also have seniors who I think want to talk about good government. We know that what people are looking for in this province is a health system that works.

Canadians across the entire country had an opportunity a number of years ago to vote for the Canadian they most admired. They picked somebody who was elected, but was never in federal government. They picked Tommy Douglas. They picked him because he had a vision and a dream that is almost universally upheld, and that is a health system that is universal, that anyone and everyone has equal access to and that I, as a politician, have no more right than a person who is homeless to the kind of service that you can get in a hospital or public care unit.

I had the opportunity to go to a hospital last week. It was an emergency room, kind of crowded, Toronto East General Hospital, one of the places in my community of which we are very proud. The people in Beaches-East York are very proud of that hospital, as are the people in Toronto-Danforth, as are the people in Scarborough Southwest because that is their community hospital. That's where we go.

I was going on the diet. I asked some questions in this House about the diet. I had to eat the food that was provided in a basket from the Daily Bread Food Bank, but I didn't want to take any food from the Daily Bread Food Bank. So I asked them exactly what it is they handed out, and they told me exactly what it was that they put in that basket. I went to the supermarket to buy that food, to No Frills because that's the cheapest place to buy it, and I bought precisely what was put in that basket, including a cup of rice, a can of vegetables and two cans of soup. Unfortunately, as I was reaching for one of the cans of soup off the supermarket shelf, the other one fell on my foot, and I had to go and have it X-rayed because it swelled up so badly I could hardly walk.

I sat there in the emergency room, and I heard people. There were some complaints, yes. There were some complaints because people didn't understand the triage system. But I will tell you, after being there for about 45 minutes and waiting my turn and being triaged, I was taken in, my foot was X-rayed, I saw a doctor, and they assured me it wasn't broken, although it was very badly bruised. They gave me some pills to take down the swelling and told me to stay off my feet—which was a sensible thing—for a couple of days. In fact, I'm back to normal again, at least as normal as I can be.

I was proud of the service that I saw there, not only for me but for everyone else who was sitting there, some with minor aches and pains, some in fairly serious condition. They acted professionally, and I think every Canadian would be proud of what was happening there.

If you're looking for good government and if you want a good government act, do something about the seniors. We are getting old at a pretty rapid rate. Between 2003 and 2009, the number of seniors aged 85-plus has increased by 36%. We are living longer, and with that living longer, we're needing more and more hospital service. The government, if they want a good government act, should include that.

The alternate level of care has gone up two times between 2005 and 2008: Do something about that. Long-term-care wait times are exploding exponentially. The

wait times are, on average, 103 days; if you're in crisis, 79 days; if you are in acute care, 55 days. But one in 10 Ontarians waits more than 600 days for long-term care. Canadians and Ontarians want a good government to do something about that.

They also want us to do something about the electricity rates and the not-so-smart meters. I remember standing in this Legislature many months ago when this was debated, and I told of my experience sitting on the electricity commission in the former borough of East York, about the smart meters that we put in several houses to see how much benefit it would be and whether people would, indeed, use less electricity if we made them or encouraged them to do things in the evening. The average saving was—in those days, one was 25 cents, another one was 75 cents, and in the third one, actually, the cost went up because the woman had young children and had to use the electricity all day. I warned that this is exactly what was going to happen. There would be very limited savings, and for some, it would cause a great deal of difficulty. That, in fact, is what has happened.

If you want to have a good government act, start talking about retirement homes. The Toronto Star did a series in the last week or two showing what it was like in retirement homes. We need to do something about that. Just yesterday, I had a phone call from a former constituent who has gone to a retirement home. She is not poor. She lives in a fairly decent place. As a matter of fact, I think it is a luxurious place by all standards when you walk into it, but she complained to me bitterly about what was happening. The retirement home got rid of the dietitian, who was supposed to provide safe meals for people like her because she's a diabetic. When she complains that the food is not conducive to her handling her diabetes and asks for such things as diabetic ice cream, they bring her diet ice cream instead because they don't understand it. There's no dietitian around and it's just simply not working.

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This government will pass this bill, but please don't insult the people of Ontario by calling it a good government act. If you're truly serious about providing good government, you'll do all the other things that should be in this act and not just something to change the process for hiring justices of the peace.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Beaches—East York speaking for almost 20 minutes about his opinion of the Good Government Act, 2010. I know the whole act is talking about it being a housekeeping act. It cleans up many different acts and makes amendments to many different provisions and many different ministries: almost seven ministries and 70 amendments to legislation that has been around for many years, to update them to be fit and be able to be used in this modern day.

I listened to the member from Beaches—East York talk about many different elements. I listened to him carefully talk about job losses, pensions, the HST, seniors, our

health care. I wish you well after that can of vegetables fell on your foot. Hopefully you'll be fine.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, I'm fine. I'm fine already.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's very important to talk about all of these elements, to talk about our health care. I agree with you: Our health care is second to none, not just in Canada but around the planet. We have a good health care system. We have good nurses, good doctors, good people working in those hospitals and in our health care system in the province of Ontario.

I also agree with the member talking about job losses. It's important for all of us as Ontarians, as Canadians—as a matter of fact, it's important for all the people around this planet after what happened last year in terms of the whole economy collapsing worldwide. Our duty and obligation is to search for every possibility to maintain our ability to attract more jobs and create more jobs for the people of Ontario.

He talked about the HST. It's an important topic. I don't like it, not many people like it, but it's something we have to do in order to attract more business, in order to modernize our tax system in the province of Ontario. The member opposite mentioned that many people don't like it, but I talked to many different business people across the province of Ontario. Everybody praised it. Everybody said it's a good initiative. It's more important for them than anything else, because when you combine the taxes it gives them a chance—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's a pleasure to be able to comment on the speech from the member from Beaches—East York who's renamed this bill the much ado about nothing act. As he commented in his speech, he said the name of this bill, Bill 110, is An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain acts. The bill was just introduced. We haven't had an opportunity to have a briefing yet. We'll be talking about it in caucus tomorrow, but it does, on the surface, appear to be more of a housekeeping bill than anything else. It's not really about good government, as the title of the act leads us to believe. I think, as the member pointed out, it's probably more about the government wanting the opposition to vote against this bill so then we're voting against good government.

I think we need to look at this government's actions, and its actions have been questionable. For example, if you're going to have good government, do you handle the Far North Act, Bill 191, the way this government handled that? And that is, they scheduled public consultations for the past summer and yet ended up cancelling those consultations and ramming the bill through. I'd say that's because they're looking after some environmental special interest groups that support the government. So with this Bill 191, they're shutting down economic development in the north. They're not listening to communities in the north. They're not listening to First Nations in the north, which are very much opposed to this bill.

I'd say, if you want to look at good government, you should look at having more select committees. We had a very successful Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which has made 23 very useful recommendations. We had a select committee a couple years ago on alternative fuels that made a lot of good recommendations, and all three parties worked together. That would be a way of having this place be more productive. I think the government should look at that if they're truly interested in good government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to talk about the impact of this good government bill on ordinary Ontarians. Ordinary Ontarians need jobs, and the Open Ontario plan, which is an integral part of this particular bill, is delivering them. More than three quarters of our recessionary job losses have all been recovered.

Our income taxes are lower. Our benefits are higher. And here's something that's really important: The single most regressive, expensive, duplicative, inefficient tax in Ontario is done, gone, repealed, finished, over, gone forever. Goodbye, PST, and no one is sorry to see you go.

All of the ads—and we've heard them—that say “We pay the HST” mean that the retail savings are flowing through to the purchaser. Let me give you an example. Let's use one in the Parkdale–High Park area. Pollock's carpets and tiles on Roncesvalles in Toronto will pay the HST. So what does that mean? It means that in the world of retail pricing they're flowing through their lower income taxes, the elimination of their small business surtax, their lower costs of doing business, and now their customers are seeing the savings in lower retail prices in the store.

Ontarians are not nostalgic over a Cold War era sales tax that cost them more than \$3 billion more than the HST does. In fact, by the time 93% of Ontarians have bought all the things that they normally buy, paid all the bills that they normally pay, filed their taxes and claimed their credits and their refunds, 93% of Ontarians will have more money in their wallets. That's all about good government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I just hope that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville gives that same speech on the stump next year at every stop and every all-candidates meeting that he can. In that way, I think we can be assured that we will have a new member of provincial Parliament from Mississauga–Streetsville.

I think his rationale is just perfect. I think you should spread that not only to Streetsville and Mississauga but to all of the Liberal ridings around the province of Ontario. I think it makes eminent good sense.

May I make a suggestion with regard to this kind of a bill? Many of the sections are housekeeping and, quite frankly, I don't think it has anything to do with good government. It just has to do with changing a few of our legislative structures and our regulations around.

I don't know why the government, when it does this kind of thing, doesn't go back to one of the practices we had here some time ago. I'm sure they could get opposition parties to co-operate with them. The best way to handle this bill—and I'm just saying this for the future, if you do this again before the next election, and perhaps we will do it when we get into government. What they should do is pass second reading of this very quickly and put it into committee of the whole, have each of the sections discussed by a parliamentary assistant or one minister or whatever, go through what that section means and ask members around the Legislature if they'd like to ask questions and make comment. That way, it would be a much more fruitful exercise for this Legislature. We would all know what we're talking about with regard to this. We wouldn't need a briefing because the briefing would be taking place here, and it would be very fruitful for all of us to learn what this bill is all about.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mississauga–Streetsville and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their kind comments.

To deal with a couple of the things that were said by the member from London–Fanshawe, I thank him because he did reiterate many of the socially progressive things that I would think a good government should be doing in difficult times. Although he did not agree with the final conclusion, he did not state that that was the wrong thing to do. I honestly believe that having a good government is doing things that are progressive, that will help people in the end, and that people want and deserve.

Quite frankly, what they are telling me they want and deserve is a whole lot of things around better health care. What they want is a whole lot of things around retirement homes, help for our seniors and some relief from the taxation or over-taxation of the HST.

I have to deal with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because time won't let me talk about—but I think what he had to say today is straight. I think that's what the government actually believes. I don't think he'll to have say that on the hustings. When copies of Hansard are prepared for tomorrow, I'm sure that they will be widely distributed throughout the province. So I thank him for his honesty, although I don't think it was politically the smartest thing that could have been said here in this House today. But having said it, thank you for your remarks, because that is where I believe the majority of this government is coming from and, in fact, what the cabinet is ordering its backbenchers to deliver.

Again, Madam Speaker, thank you for the full opportunity of debating here today.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being almost 6 o'clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Women's History Month and Persons Day / Mois de l'histoire des femmes et Journée de l'affaire « personne »	
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	2696
National School Safety Week / Semaine nationale de la sécurité scolaire	
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	2697
Waste Reduction Week	
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Mardi 19 octobre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES ORGANISATIONS SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 7, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations / *Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les organisations sans but lucratif.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've just got a few minutes left. This is a time-allocated debate—the guillotine motion. The government didn't want to hear from the Parliament of Ontario around this bill.

I just want to recount what I had to say, because it was some time ago that I had a chance to commence my comments on this bill. I remember that I did congratulate and commend the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, one Rick Johnson, for assuming the ad hoc role of parliamentary assistant during the course of this bill through the committee. It was a pleasure to work with him.

I recall how the government House leader was in a snit at the time, which is why this bill got forced into time allocation. As a result of the snit that the government House leader was in—don't forget, she was in a little bit of hot water because of inappropriate comments that she made around the reappointment of Ombudsman André Marin.

As it ends up at the end of the day, the government House leader embraced André Marin with both arms. She was overwhelmed, I must say. I'm sure she was overwhelmed at his reappointment—I recall that very clearly—as were most of the government backbenchers. But she was in a snit around the reappointment of André Marin and her having gotten into some hot water because of comments she had made in the press about the selection process, even though she was totally unaware of what happened in the committee around the selection

process. So it was inaccurate information that she conveyed to the public through the media.

Of course, there were the countless numbers of unidentified government sources, unidentified Liberal sources, that were badmouthing André Marin, slandering him, libelling him in the media.

Just as a brief aside, it's remarkable how the negative commentary on Mr. Marin ended immediately after he was reappointed. That's most interesting. Isn't that interesting? It allows one to infer, rather logically, that there was a concerted, concentrated and specific campaign to derail Mr. Marin by Liberals. Of course, the Liberals have just finished their weekend confab during which the keynote speech was on the art of mudslinging. I do notice—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Did you write that?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, I read the book just Friday night, after I read that in the paper. But I do notice that there was some material distributed during that weekend confab. I have copies here. There were leadership campaign brochures:

“Chris Bentley for leader: Why wait until October 7th 2011?”

“Kathleen Wynne for leader: She's taken out one leader already!”—which is a reasonably good theme. I trust that she'll continue to use that in her leadership campaign.

“Glen Murray for leader: the right Manitoban for the job!” Of course, why not?

“Sandra Pupatello for leader: ready to move up to the better junkets.”

I don't make this up. This is material that was handed out, I'm told, at the weekend confab by the Liberals where they were being spoken to by the American king of mudslinging, Warren Kinsella, for whom I have a great deal of admiration and who is, of course, an expert at mudslinging. I only wish he was one of ours, rather than Liberals'. I like Warren Kinsella.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: A comment on the subject matter would be appreciated, I think.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member that it is Bill 65 that we are debating.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But the bill is rather boring and tedious, and the leadership aspirations of various—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to stay within the topic of the bill being discussed and to not use a prop.

Mr. Peter Kormos: As I pointed out, Bill 65 is rather tedious.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Does that mean you're going to support it?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course, we've already supported it. Ms. Wynne, who has already taken out one leader and who's prepared to take out another, to wit, her own—internecine, I suppose, is the word that's appropriate.

But I really should speak to the bill, and I only have eight minutes left. For me to speak to the bill means that I can't mock Officer Bubbles once again, as I did yesterday afternoon, that wimpy Toronto cop, Constable Adam Josephs, who is suing people—the cop who said, "Oh, a bubble hit me." A bubble in the groin, perhaps. This wimpy Constable Adam Josephs, Officer Bubbles, who's suing for defamation, is now the subject matter of more mockery and abuse by his own colleagues, I'm sure, than he is by anybody out there in the community. So I can't talk about him, as I did yesterday afternoon during the government's good government bill, which is an oxymoron. Josephs alleges that the—

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind the member to stay with the bill.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Josephs alleges that—perhaps a non-profit corporation could assist him. He may find himself utilizing Bill 65 once it becomes law, as it undoubtedly will, after third reading vote this morning. But Officer Josephs alleges that this pictorial display has brought him "ridicule, scandal and contempt both personally and as a member of the (Toronto Police Service)." By Constable Adam Josephs' behaviour—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to stay with the debate on the bill.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you. Bill 65. Constable Adam Josephs' behaviour during the G20 has brought him "ridicule, scandal and contempt both personally and as a member of the (Toronto Police Service)."

You will recall that I also mocked the funeral industry last time we spoke to Bill 65. I tore a strip off the Catholic Cemeteries planning board because they, of course, were the subject matter of the committee. You recall that, don't you, Speaker? They were the subject matter of one of the submissions before the committee on Bill 65. So I tore a strip off of them and, amongst other things, the glossy brochures they had, which noted, "At the end of life, the church makes one last act of love by providing holy ground for us to rest and await the resurrection." I suppose if that's what it takes to get money from people, so be it.

New Democrats have supported this bill. New Democrats were surprised at how sloppy the bill was, and we discovered that once it came to committee, in terms of what it failed to address. New Democrats were amazed at the fact that the original author or sponsor of the bill, who is the member for Hamilton Mountain, because I can't refer to Ms. Aggelonitis by name, the Minister of Revenue—how she was the original author of the bill but

how quickly she had her name deleted from the bill and had it replaced with the name of the current Minister of Consumer Services, the member from the Kingston area.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Can we move on to another speaker?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I should note that the member for Essex is antsy this morning. I don't know whether he is colicky or—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It is not in order to discuss another member here. Just stay with the bill.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for Welland is simply trying to impugn some sort of motive of mine. All I want, Speaker, is—in this case, he is going at great lengths to intimidate, I think, the Speaker because he won't stay on the subject, and I just think we should move on to another speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to confine his comments to the bill.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I will, and I have, if people will listen carefully.

Now, I find—the member from Essex, of course, is at the kiddie table, as his cabinet minister—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: If there's anybody in this place I don't appreciate being attacked personally by, it's the member for Welland, and I wish that you would interfere in his comments and see that he does not do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to refrain, as he knows, and continue.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I apologize profusely. I just apologize from the heart and the gut. But in this morning's Star the Minister of Economic Development and Trade indicated clearly that if you're not in cabinet, you're at the kiddies' table. It's in her quote in the Star. So the members from the kiddies' table who want to raise—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to continue speaking only on the bill.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Just move on.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course, with reference to Bill 65, the member from Essex appears to have a problem this morning. I don't know whether it's a function of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I've already reminded you. I'd ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw that comment. The member from Essex is whiny this morning, and I apologize to him too. If there's anything I've done—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I think the member for Welland, although he's doing it poorly, is trying to attack me. I don't know why. I quite enjoy the job I do in this Legislature as Deputy Speaker, albeit a much more important job than he has. I just wish that he would refrain and that perhaps you could move on to somebody who has something substantive—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It is not a point of order.

I ask the member to contain his remarks to Bill 65.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. Of course, you know that I always appreciate your direction and your counsel, and I appreciate you having had the member for Essex sit down. So I thank you, Speaker, and I value your leadership in this institution.

We know we're going to be supporting Bill 65—everybody in the Legislature is—which is why it just struck me as odd that the government would time-allocate it, and it struck me as odd that the government would order it to have hearings in Kitchener and Sudbury and Kingston and one other city—I can't remember—but that not a single soul in any of those cities wanted to speak to it. This government was prepared to blow tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars on the committee travelling to visit those communities when not a single soul from those communities wanted to speak to it, but for two who were accommodated by television and telephone communication.

So here's a government—it's clear that it's on the ropes. We see the polling. We know what we hear in the markets when we go home on Saturday morning. Here's a government that is pathetically desperate, that is prepared to use mudslinging, and indicated that clearly at their weekend confab over at the Sheraton Centre here in the city of Toronto. Here is a government that thinks it can somehow lure some popular support with Bill 65, but in fact most of the concern about it was, "Oh, well, it's relatively benign." But it failed to incorporate some of the most fundamental things that non-profit corporations sought, including asset protection.

It's just incredible that the government missed the boat on this one again. First, it's not-so-smart stupid meters that are increasing people's electricity rates, then it's Internet gambling so kids can blow mommy's or daddy's credit card in the privacy of their bedroom on their computer, and now it's a somewhat benign Bill 65—eight seconds left—that New Democrats, of course, will be supporting, but also acknowledging that this government is an absolute failure.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Stormont, Dundas and North Glengarry.

Mr. Jim Brownell: South Glengarry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Close.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Yes, it is close.

I am honoured to rise in the House today to support the Minister of Consumer Services on the proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. As parliamentary assistant to the minister and MPP for the riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, I know first-hand of the importance of not-for-profit corporations and the reform that is necessary to help our partners in this sector operate effectively.

If passed, this legislation would provide a modern legal framework to better address the needs of Ontario's approximately 46,000 not-for-profit corporations. It would make it easier for them to operate in today's world, as well as strengthen the overall sector.

Reform is long overdue. Let me explain with a bit of history. As the Minister of Consumer Services said in his

introductory remarks to this third reading for Bill 65, Ontario's not-for-profit sector is currently guided by the provisions of the existing Corporations Act. This legislation was enacted in 1907. It was set up to apply to all types of corporations, including not-for-profit, business, insurance and mining. It has not been substantially revised since 1953. Since then, there have been only small amendments.

Through the 1970s, the province introduced separate statutes to govern business corporations. However, the act was not updated to reflect this fundamental change or the many other changes over the decades in this sector. The result: For decades, large parts of the Corporations Act have been outdated. Not-for-profit organizations have told the Ministry of Consumer Services that they have been forced to piece together provisions of the act that apply to them. As you can imagine, this makes it difficult to use. Even lawyers have told the ministry that they, on occasion, find it difficult to locate the applicable law.

0920

There are also significant gaps. For instance, the current act lacks provisions that set out the duty and standard of care of directors and officers. There are no statutory defences for them against personal liability. It lacks a complete set of rules to address director and member meetings. Further, it is not consistent with the newer legislation in place in other Canadian jurisdictions. Basically, it is outdated legislation.

Our government wants to modernize the outdated legislation. Ontario's not-for-profits deserve fair, comprehensive and up-to-date laws that enable them to operate well in a modern world. The proposed not-for-profit corporations act would meet the need. If passed, this legislation would offer clarity and completeness. It would follow a logical order. It would address a range of issues, from incorporation to corporate governance, to member rights and protections, to defences for directors and officers and to dissolution. It would be a welcome improvement for the sector.

Some might wonder what constitutes a not-for-profit corporation in Ontario under the current legislation, the Corporations Act. There are three key elements: (1) It is an organization that carries on its activities without the purpose of gain for its members. (2) It is incorporated as a corporation that does not issue shares. (3) It must have not-for-profit purposes and use any profits that it makes to promote these purposes.

These are the facts, but as we all know, not-for-profits are so much more than the sum of their parts. From daycare centres to food banks, from social clubs to service clubs, from professional groups to neighbourhood associations, these organizations are the heart and soul of our communities.

Last night, if I could just digress for a moment, I was in my riding as the guest speaker for a not-for-profit group, the Lost Villages Historical Society, doing great work in the community, preserving and protecting our history.

They make remarkable contributions to our society, our people and our economy, and they are vital to the strength and success of our province.

I would like to clarify which organizations would and would not be affected by our proposed reform. All not-for-profit organizations that are incorporated in Ontario under the Corporations Act would be affected. There are some types of not-for-profits operating in Ontario that would not be impacted. These include not-for-profit co-operative corporations, not-for-profits that are incorporated federally and unincorporated not-for-profit organizations. Additionally, some not-for-profits are incorporated through other special private or public acts. These corporations would not be affected by our proposed reform if either type of act expressly states that the proposed new act does not apply. For example, the Corporations Act does not apply to municipal corporations. Therefore, municipalities would not be affected by our proposed reform.

With respect to charities, our proposed legislation would govern their incorporation, governance and dissolution, but not their regulation. It would also facilitate the activities of not-for-profit social enterprise corporations in Ontario. Not-for-profit social enterprise corporations, which are organizations with specific social or environmental goals, would be permitted to engage, with no restrictions, in commercial activities to advance or support their not-for-profit purposes.

I'd like to share some of the key reforms of the proposed new act and illustrate how they differ from the current Corporations Act and the positive impact they would have on not-for-profit organizations should the proposed new act be implemented. The first thing I'd like to point out is that the structure of our proposed new act would be quite different from the current act. You have heard that the current act is difficult to navigate and many of its provisions are difficult to find. Let me give you an example. About 25 sections in part II of the current legislation that relate to share capital corporations are made applicable in part III to non-profit corporations by cross-reference to section numbers. As a result, even many lawyers find it hard to find the applicable law.

In addition, many provisions, such as the rules relating to conflicts of interest by directors, indemnification of directors and rotating boards, are out of date.

The proposed act would be much clearer. It would follow a logical order: incorporation, governance and dissolution. The proposed act would have no set of provisions governing different types of not-for-profit corporations. This would keep the proposed statute simple to follow and make it easier for a not-for-profit organization and corporation to know which provisions apply to it.

It would also provide clearer rules, such as setting out a duty of care for directors, which does not exist in the current act. Bill 65 clearly sets out that directors and officers have a duty to act honestly and in good faith, with a view to the best interest of the corporation. They must exercise the care, diligence and skill that a reason-

ably prudent person would exercise in comparable circumstances.

Good corporate governance is essential to running any organization, and not-for-profits are no exception. We have heard requests for improvements to the current act's corporate governance provisions.

For example, there is no provision setting out directors' and officers' fiduciary duties. Stakeholders have expressed concerns about accountability, the need to reduce unnecessary burdens and ensuring the flexibility required to deal with today's world. The lack of corporate governance provisions creates an element of uncertainty for the not-for-profit sector, which we intend to address in the proposed new act.

The proposed new act would provide more flexible and up-to-date rules for dealing with the relationship between the corporation and its directors, officers and members. The amendments would enable not-for-profit corporations to govern themselves more efficiently and enhance decision-making structures.

Proposed new provisions would be added to address gaps in the current legislation and clarify rules. A duty of care for directors would be set out in the statute similar to that found in the Ontario Business Corporations Act.

Stakeholders have expressed concern regarding the corporate governance provision in three specific areas, which our proposed new act would address.

First, the maximum number of outside directors: The current act does not contain a provision that permits outside directors, because all directors must be members of the corporation. The new act proposes to allow outside directors and would not place a limit on the number of non-members that can be directors.

We have heard, too, about the need for appropriate oversight in the case of corporations that receive significant outside funds. The proposed legal framework ensures there is appropriate oversight in the case of corporations that receive significant outside funds.

The new act would continue the requirement that not-for-profit corporations have a minimum of three directors. A public benefit corporation is required to have no more than one third of the directors who are employees of the corporation.

Lastly, meetings: The current act does not contain a provision to permit a resolution in lieu of a director's meeting. Stakeholders have identified this as an unnecessary burden in conducting the affairs of their business.

The new act proposes that a unanimous resolution is permitted in lieu of a director's meeting. This would provide an important degree of flexibility and allows corporations to avoid the cost and expense of holding meetings, while still ensuring participation in decision-making.

Another key area where our proposed act makes significant improvements over the current act is with regard to member remedies. We propose members should have increased remedies to ensure directors are acting in the corporation's best interest. The current act contains limited remedies that can only be used in limited

circumstances by certain complainants. This increases the need for costly and time-consuming remedies such as litigation.

Under our proposed legislation, member democracy would be enhanced. For example, the proposed act would increase accountability by ensuring a corporation and its directors and officers act according to the articles and bylaws of the corporation and in the corporation's best interests. This reduces the need for costly and time-consuming remedies and provides appropriate deterrence for improper practices.

0930

These are just a few of the significant changes our proposed new act would bring to the governance and day-to-day operations of not-for-profit organizations.

I would like to take a moment to put Bill 65 into the larger context. As you may have heard, the federal government enacted the new Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act last year. Our proposed act would, if passed, become consistent with the federal act. Both would provide, for example, a clear and easy structure to follow, a simplified incorporation process and enhanced member remedies. Our provisions would also be broadly consistent with those of other Canadian provinces that have introduced modern legislation to govern not-for-profits, such as the province of Saskatchewan.

As you know, our government has been committed to a business modernization initiative. We have enacted the Securities Transfer Act, we have updated the Ontario Business Corporations Act and the Personal Property Security Act and made amendments to various other related statutes. Now we propose to modernize the law of not-for-profit corporations. The combined effect of these changes would establish Ontario as a leading jurisdiction in business law.

The proposed Not-for-Profit Corporations Act would also support our government's Open for Business initiative by streamlining operational and administrative requirements and processing applications more efficiently.

It would also align with Ontario's poverty reduction strategy. There are thousands of not-for-profit organizations across this province that are dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families who live in poverty. This proposed act would make it easier for them and for all of Ontario's unique and diverse not-for-profit organizations to operate and conduct business in today's marketplace.

If passed, Bill 65 would provide these vital organizations with many new and important benefits. It would provide more flexible and up-to-date rules for directors, officers and members of not-for-profit corporations; provide improved corporate governance and accountability; provide efficient means for incorporation and operation of not-for-profit corporations; address gaps in the current legislation, such as providing specific protection for liability for directors; harmonize the law with other Canadian jurisdictions; and provide clear and more comprehensive rules: for example, it would set out a duty of care for directors.

Ontario's not-for-profit sector contributes greatly to our society, our communities and our province. The sector is crucial to those who depend upon the diverse services that its organizations provide. It is vital to our economy, generating about \$50 billion in annual revenues and employing almost one million Ontarians. Our government is committed to strengthening this sector that offers so much to so many. We urge all members of the House to support the proposed new, modern Not-for-Profit Corporations Act by approving this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure here to, first of all, speak on Bill 65, which, at this point in the debate process, is being time-allocated, meaning they're actually shutting debate down.

A couple of speakers this morning: One read from a very carefully prepared script and the other improvised rather spontaneously, shall we say. My attempt would be to mix both approaches.

I have looked in the past at what the comments have been, and we should be on the record as saying that in a general way we're supportive of this rather omnibus type of bill. It seems these bills that come forward nowadays are kind of sliding under the disguise of being large and complex, so many members don't spend a lot of time thumbing through them. I lost my original copy; I think it's probably in my office somewhere. But I did take time, because there were a couple of issues that I had some questions about. They were very technical, I'll say that. Most members have commented that this is a technical area.

I made reference to a couple of the remarks made by our side on this and have found them to be quite informative, and I encourage them to the reading of others.

This bill was first introduced in May 2010, with second reading in June. At that time, it was time-allocated.

It's important to put in perspective what the bill is trying to do. I think it's trying to modernize, as they say, and make some efficiencies in the current legislation that governs not-for-profit organizations.

When I looked at the remarks, I thought there were two—one is our member from York-Simcoe, who is now in the chair, by the way.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Who is that, by the way?

Mr. John O'Toole: We're not supposed to use names here, but it is Ms. Munro. She has been here for some time.

She has actually done quite a bit of work in this area, because in 1995, when Mike Harris was Premier, he assigned Ms. Munro to a very, very powerful mandate to investigate the whole volunteer sector. She did commission a select committee. She did commission a group of advisers who work in the not-for-profit industry and, from that, developed a pretty strategic plan for recognizing and, indeed, celebrating the work of volunteers in our society.

We all know that Ontario and Canada are well recognized for the work of the volunteer sector, both inside our

own province, in the country and around the world. I know members here, in their own communities, in almost every case, on every side of the House, will at some time in their journey to this place, and after, have spent time in those sections.

The most important thing to look at is the role of youth. One of the changes that was made, and quite controversially at the time, was the mandated hours of community service. The intent, when you strip away the ideology and the politics of it all, is that we all should contribute to the community, that community being our family, our town, our province or our country, depending on the sets of skills and things that we bring to those activities. Initially, I had many, many complaints about those community volunteer hours, and I can only say this: Those hours, I think, have benefited almost every child who has participated in them.

Learning and mentoring is the role of some of the adults in those supervisory roles, making sure it is a meaningful activity. A good example would be the pages who are here today and who do come to this place from various grade 7 and 8 programs. The experience they get here, although they don't get paid, cannot be measured in dollars. It has to be measured in experience.

That's really what volunteers do. They should all be thanked. The debate rages on about whether or not they should be rewarded in some way, financially or materially. I don't have a problem in many cases with that.

When you look at this bill, it talks about the structures. The two types of structures under those are those with share capital, with voting shares, and those with non-share capital. For the most part, this deals with the volunteer, non-share capital corporation organizations. I think that's important, because in one of the questions I have, some of them do accumulate property. This bill allows them to borrow money; this allows them to do certain functions. There's not quite as much accountability, I think, as there could be. That's one of the things I have a concern about.

I want to go back to the fundamentals here of the background that I have. The bill should provide for accountability mechanisms and review. I think we all agree with that. To determine if this bill could reduce costs and red tape, we should have some benchmark or method of saying, "Have we achieved the verbal objectives, or the stated objectives, of Bill 65?"

Also, you want to make sure that there's accountability within the organization itself and the board of directors—how they're appointed, how they're removed—and that's covered in one of the sections here. As I said, there are 15 different sections. In the few minutes I have left, I might go over some of them.

There are an estimated 161,000 not-for-profit charities in Canada. Half of these—54%—are run entirely by volunteers.

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Imagine, when you look at volunteers, how much they contribute to the welfare of our common society. I think it's incredible. Yesterday we had the MS Society. I'm

involved in my riding of Durham with the MS Society. They put on a seminar here yesterday to educate members about a disease or affliction that's really disabling for individuals and their families and those around them. Now there's hope on the horizon with Dr. Zamboni's liberation therapy.

I've seen firsthand how much the volunteers work at the MS Society or the Cancer Society, how much money they raise and how much they make us come together as a community. It's inspirational, without a lot of money being spent on organizational structures. Often, if you send government in to do a job, you've got 5,000 bureaucrats, each making \$100,000 a year, running the thing. We're dealing with it now in the hospital sector; there's an issue here about the use of consultants. I think we need to make sure that we keep it as simple as possible, yet with accountability and transparency.

This bill is quite cumbersome if you look at it. We deal with lots of bills here. As I said before, I just looked through a few sections and the ones I had trouble with were primarily—this could be a troubling area. I'm bringing up something more controversial than necessary in the time allocation motion, what we call a guillotine motion. Why are they trying to eliminate debate? In fact, it's my understanding they're not going to proclaim this into law until way after the next election. What's the problem here? We're all in harmony. I think all sides agree with it.

We need public hearings. The bill has been amended and I think there needs to be more consultation with the stakeholders themselves, to see if it achieves the goal and the objectives outlined in the preamble or the government's ministerial statement. Does it achieve that? Is it measurable? How and when do we measure it? Is there a report here on these not-for-profit companies or organizations?

When I look at the one section—part XII, on liquidation and dissolution—it's quite an interesting section. Let's take, for instance, the cemeteries. Those are interesting groups and I know I see people smiling. I've had contact with the Mount Pleasant group. I know Mr. Smitherman, the mayoral candidate in Toronto, had made promises to resolve that issue prior to the election and then virtually refused to meet with them to resolve the issue. I think that deserves the light of day. I'm not qualified to make an assessment in any way of whether or not either party has abided by the laws, but if you look at that section here—part XII, "Liquidation and Dissolution"—it says, "Voluntary winding up"; there's a section on that; "Inspectors"; "Vacancy in office of liquidator"; "Removal of liquidator"; "Commencement of winding up"; "Corporation to cease activities."

What do they do with the property? This is the issue here which somebody slowly, by their own bylaws—whether those bylaws constitute laws in themselves, I would question. They have not been approved by government. In fact, these corporations are approved by government. Their filing and fundamental records, their corporate finance, all of it—this whole idea of mem-

bership and accountability—is set up by a government structure under the act itself.

Incorporation is in part II and these organizations must have a certificate of incorporation and, as such, are accountable to Premier McGuinty. If there's anybody who's not abiding by the law—certainly, in the case of the Mount Pleasant group, if these accusations are true that they're trying to slowly take over this corporation and its assets, which are all the land holdings that they have by some right of legislation, then that should be brought to the forefront as well.

But let's move back to the general principle of our society, a society that I think is very well celebrated as we speak by the work that is done by Ms. Munro, as I said before, for setting up the practical level of giving experience to young people.

I like the remarks by the new Prime Minister of Great Britain, David Cameron, who tomorrow, Wednesday, is probably going to make the most profound shift in the British entitlement society—that's going to be shocking—because they have a huge deficit. In terms of their deficit versus Ontario's, they are the Titanic; they are headed for the iceberg for sure. In the monetary crisis they were very much extended and their six major banks were all in trouble, but somehow the debt they've accumulated, the debt-to-GDP ratio, is about 10 times higher than the one in Ontario, in Canada, and it's a serious problem.

David Cameron has come out with—his proposal during the election was called the Big Society proposal. The Big Society ultimately speaks to what I think are Conservative values. The values of this are personal responsibility and respect. I think those are very simple and understandable terms of personal responsibility. I'm responsible for what I do, to myself and to you—and respect for one another. An organization, a society in its greatest form, the family unit, today could be said to be under some siege.

I think that, if we look at our activity in society, whether it's under this bill, the statute that we're talking about, if we had personal responsibility and respect, especially for volunteers who make our society a better place to live, we'd all be better off collectively.

If this bill sets out to achieve this elimination of red tape and streamlining and modernizing it, and we can measure that, then I'd be supportive of the bill. That being said, I think we should clarify the issues with the stakeholders. If there are unresolved issues in the transformation of our new not-for-profit sector, then they should get on with fixing and reviewing those problems in a public forum. Anything we can do to streamline and harmonize and make it easier for volunteers to make our society a better place, I would want to be on record as being in favour of that. Because this is a time allocation motion, I probably will not be given any more time to speak on this bill, but I look forward to public hearings.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 1, 2010, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Gerretsen has

moved third reading of Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0949 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to welcome page Jonathan Antony's parents in the public gallery: Ms. Viji Antony and Mr. Joseph Antony. Please welcome them to the House.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome Bill Laidlaw, the executive director of the Canadian Assistive Devices Association, along with members of the association to the House.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know they were introduced yesterday by the Minister of the Environment, but I'm glad to be here today and introduce Tom and Marilyn Campbell from the town of Prescott, located in my riding. I know their daughter Dawn Waltenbury is over on the government side, and they're here because of the new page, their grandson and son, Nicholas Waltenbury from North Bay.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to introduce the mother and family friend of page Jayden Rae from the great riding of Whitby—Oshawa: Page Rae and Rhonda Saunderson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce, in the public gallery, the chair of the Renfrew County District School Board, Roy Reiche; the mayor of the town of Petawawa, His Worship Bob Sweet; Lisa Kuehl, the superintendent of business for Renfrew county school board; and Roger Clarke, the director of education for the Renfrew county school board, who are here to meet with officials from the Ministry of Education.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Pickering—Scarborough East and page Sanjay Pavone, to welcome his mother, Dr. Rosemarie Lall; his father, Leo Pavone; his sister Damiana Pavone; and his grandmother Francesca Pavone. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Ajax—Pickering and page Olivia Kelly, we'd like to welcome her mother, Wendy Kelly; her father, Craig Kelly; her sister Lauren Kelly; and her grandfather George Kelly to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to assemble for introduction.

I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 39th Parliament.

Jonathan Antony, Richmond Hill; Emmett Bisbee, York-Simcoe; Harnameh Dhawan, Brampton West; Elle Doherty, Huron-Bruce; Carina Hochgeschurz, Carleton-Mississippi Mills; Bridget Heeman, from the great riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London; Ffion Hughes, Welland; Priscile Itoua-Mamic, Scarborough-Guildwood; Olivia Kelly, Ajax-Pickering; Haadiyah Khan, Scarborough-Rouge River; Kieran Lawlor, Toronto-Danforth; Calder Morton-Ferguson, Guelph; Eric O'Brien, Oxford; Sanjay Pavone, Pickering-Scarborough East; Jayden Rae, Whitby-Oshawa; Kimberly Ren, Mississauga South; Soumiya Suresh, Markham-Unionville; Anika Szabo, Willowdale; Marie-Josée Vercouter, Chatham-Kent-Essex; Nicholas Waltenbury, Nipissing.

Welcome to all of our pages.

VISITORS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Today, the assistive devices folks are with us at Queen's Park to let us know about what they do and the issues that folks who are disabled have challenges with on a daily basis.

I would like to tell you about the generosity of Joe Millage from Shoppers Home Health. He has donated the wheelchair that I am going to be using for the rest of the day to a worthy organization in Burlington, so I would like to thank him for that publicly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in March, you told Ontario families that your plan to restore Ontario to fiscal health was premised on getting the public sector to agree to a wage freeze. But public sector union leaders did not take you seriously, and they've walked away from the table. In the meantime, you've lost three arbitrations in a row. Premier, given that your plan has gone off the rails, what is your new plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we wrapped up our first round of consultations with our partners in the public and broader public sectors. We have engaged what I would call a very fruitful dialogue on issues that are important to Ontarians: the provision of health care, the provision of education. We will continue this process as we have, and I will be reporting later in the fall with respect to the overall fiscal situation in Ontario.

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But we have had what I would term a very robust consultation with our partners in the public and broader public sectors, speaking with them in an open and honest fashion. We look forward to continuing that as we move forward to preserve and, indeed, enhance Ontario's public service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I do want to say, Premier, that I'm disappointed you didn't answer my question. It appears that your only plan seems to be to run from the issue. Maybe that's the sound we hear of your footsteps backtracking yet again.

Back to the Premier, with all due respect to the finance minister: Premier, you said that you expected your transfer partners to bargain responsibly "so that, together, we can ... protect schools and hospitals," but arbitrators have gone the other way. You've lost three arbitrations in a row, one of which awarded a 4.5% wage increase, leaving administrators to say they're going to have to cut front-line services in return. Basically, the premise is that your transfers were based on a wage freeze across the public sector that you have failed to deliver. So I ask you, Premier: What front-line health care services do you plan to cut now that your wage restraint plan has gone badly off the rails?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The way to make progress in building our public health and education systems is with respect and working together. If we learned anything over the course of the last period of time, it is that working together, Ontarians—whether labour or management, whether white collar or blue collar—will pull together to guarantee and help build those services that all Ontarians rely on.

We think that is the right approach. We're pleased with the progress we're making. We've had a very fruitful round of consultations and we look forward to continuing to build partnerships, to help ensure that we never go back to a time when we lost 26 million school days in our education system and that we can work together to build better public services for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier again, as opposed to the finance minister: Premier, you need to show leadership on this issue. You have made some very clear commitments of a wage freeze in order to protect front-line services. You have failed to do so.

Seven months have passed since you made that promise. You've lost three arbitrations in a row. As a result, we're seeing cutbacks in hospitals; we're seeing senior citizens not getting the service they require in our long-term-care homes; arbitrators continue to give out wage increases, up to 4.5%; and hard-working Ontario families are forced to once again pay the bills for your mismanagement and lack of leadership on this issue.

Premier, are you planning to backtrack yet again, or what exactly is your plan now that the original one is off the rails?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Premier McGuinty has shown the leadership that has the best labour relations record in the history of Ontario.

You want to pick a fight, don't you? That's what you're all about. That member and his party want to pick a fight. When he's not expensing his McNuggets, he wants to pick a fight with teachers, with firefighters and with communities. We reject that. We reject going back to an era when school kids lost 26 million days.

We pledge to continue to work with all of our partners in the public and broader public sectors as we return to balance and, at the same time, enhance and build the vital public services that all Ontarians count on and that all of the partners in our sector work hard to deliver. Let's stand up for partnership and for working together.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again for the Premier: I'm disappointed you didn't answer the question. It is also disappointing that on a very serious issue, the finance minister simply chooses to fill the airtime with bluster. Sadly, it means he has no answers. That's not good enough for Ontario families. The Ontario PCs will deliver for Ontario families, who pay the bills.

Premier, we suspect that the auditor's report tomorrow on hospitals will show that you have failed to keep another promise and that Liberal-friendly consultants will be back at the trough. We also see today that you are cutting vitamin D testing and sacrificing front-line care to seniors and Ontario families because your plan to control spending has gone off the rails.

So Premier, I will ask you now for the fourth time: What's next? What services are you going to cut because you have no plan to keep your promise for a wage freeze?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to assure the people of Ontario that we will not join the leader of the official opposition and his party in their solemn commitment to cut \$3 billion out of health care. I think—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we have a different approach—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, I just asked you to withdraw. I just sat down and you started to comment again.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Kick him out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need any help from the member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have a different approach when it comes to health care, and my honourable colleagues opposite know that. More importantly, Ontario families are experiencing that.

We're the first government in Ontario to track wait times, and they're coming down. People don't have to wait as long to get their cancer treatment, hip and knee surgeries, MRIs and CT scans. Nearly one million more Ontarians now have a family doctor. There are over 10,000 more nurses and 2,300 more doctors. We're building 18 new hospitals in Ontario, and we've worked very hard to cut the price of generic drugs in half. Those are positive, progressive steps that we've taken on behalf of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think that says a lot about what has happened to Premier McGuinty after seven years in office. He dodges my first three questions, and then the first words out of his mouth are—how do I say it in parliamentary language?—words that are not even in passing acquaintance with the facts. We will invest in front-line services to help the families who pay the bills.

Premier, look at your priorities. Since you took office, the number of assistant deputy ministers in the Ministry of Health has increased from five to 10, a 100% increase. Your LHINs have sucked some \$250 million out of health care, and they don't do a single surgery or a single MRI. Families in Hamilton and Niagara, which I represent, are now having their home care cut while you give a bureaucrat in your bloated ministry the money that should be going to patients through the CCAC.

Premier, what happened to you after seven years in office? Why did your priority become bloated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There are a few other numbers I think Ontarians might be interested in, including 10,000 more nurses, 2,300 more doctors and 18 new hospitals.

My honourable colleague says that he is concerned about ensuring that we use every health care dollar efficiently, but when we stood up in this Legislature and introduced a new law to cut the price of generic drugs in half, saving money for families, government, taxpayers and businesses alike, they voted against that. So it's hard to tell from one day to the next whose side he's really on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The sad reality under the McGuinty government is that Ontario families are struggling to make ends meet. They're working harder and longer and paying more in taxes but seeing less in return. The Ontario PCs want to make sure that every dollar goes into front-line health care services, not the bloated bureaucracies that Dalton McGuinty has created. We suspect—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member on the use of names.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We suspect, Premier, that tomorrow's report will show that the Liberal-friendly consultants are back at the trough at the LHINs and at the hospitals.

But here's what speaks to the McGuinty government's approach. Look at the \$250,000 sole-source contract you gave to McKinsey and Co. It was for a so-called lean project that was supposed to be a plan for reducing waste in the Ministry of Health by 20%, but your so-called lean plan went 100% over budget, into the pocket of consultants. Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're looking forward to introducing a new law tomorrow, a new bill, which will deal more specifically with lobbyists. We think it's inappropriate for a lobbyist to be paid with public dollars to try to solicit more public dollars from the government.

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I can tell you what we're also proud to do on behalf of Ontarians. We have, so far, reduced government-wide use of consultants in contrast to the previous government; we have reduced government-wide use of consultants by more than 54%. Overall, travel expenses are down by 23%, and government advertising is down by 20%. I am proud to report that, overall, government spending by the Ontario government, on a per capita basis, is now 30% below the average of the other provincial governments.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This winter will be the first winter that millions of Ontarians will be paying time-of-use hydro rates, and families who use electrical heating are worried sick about rates that are going to hit them hard when they can least afford it, when they have to heat their homes. Independent experts are saying that switching to time-of-use pricing will drive hydro rates higher. My question is a simple one: What is the Premier's plan for relief for Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to a very important matter of public policy once again.

The fact of the matter is that at the time we formed the government back in 2003, our electricity system was in a terrible state of disrepair. It had gone wanting for a long time in terms of new investment and new generation and new transmission. The first thing we set out to do was to put in place a reliable electricity system, so that no matter who you are, whether you're working in an office, at the hospital, at a school or at home, when you flicked that switch, the lights came on. We have achieved that.

The second thing we're working on is cleaning up our electricity sources. That's why we are shutting down coal-fired generation. We just shut down four more plants. That's like taking two million cars off the road.

The third thing we are doing, of course, is building a new and exciting and vibrant sector of the economy. It's a new industry. It is green energy, and we're talking about 16,000 new jobs so far.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families who rely on electricity to heat their homes simply cannot shift their usage. They'll just end up paying much, much more.

Sandi Mugford writes this: "My husband is severely disabled and at home. Do I turn down the heat in the day to save money and risk him getting pneumonia? Do I tell his support workers and my caregiver relief, 'You cannot do household chores or dry clothes during peak hours; please come back after 10 p.m. and do the work'?"

What does the Premier think Ms. Mugford should do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Time of use is a very important part of our modernization plan for our energy system. It's something that's going to give families—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Some of these comments that members are making, that they think they're making under their breath, are being picked up by the Speaker.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Time of use is a very important part of our plan to modernize our energy system.

I would think the NDP would be onside for our efforts to bring modernization to our aging energy system and replace those decades-old meters with new, modern smart meters. Apparently, they're not. Apparently, they want to take us back. Apparently, they don't believe Ontario families deserve the opportunity to engage in efforts to shift their use off of peak.

As we go through these new programs, we understand that Ontario families need some assistance, and that's why the Premier brought forward, very recently, our Ontario energy and property tax credit. Two thirds of Ontario seniors are going to benefit from that; 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians are going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Apparently, this minister and the Premier don't believe that families in Ontario are struggling and can't pay their hydro bills. Each and every day, my office hears from more and more of these Ontarians, and they're worried, like Susan Jones, who writes this: "The cost of electricity is one whole paycheque for me, as it runs between \$550 to \$600 every two months.... I work in the health care profession and I work every other weekend and have days off during the week.... When smart meters came into effect, I couldn't do my wash on my days off because I would be charged more."

Taking the HST off hydro would give Ms. Jones the very break that she needs. Why won't the Premier simply do that?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We fully understand that Ontario families have been through some tough times. We've been through a global recession, and Ontario families are still struggling; some are trying to work their way out of that.

We recognize that we are in a time of rising energy costs, and that's why our Premier brought forward the

Ontario energy and property tax credit. Two thirds of Ontario seniors are going to benefit from that; 2.8 million Ontario families are going to see relief as a result of this. This is a good thing.

I guess my question to the Leader of the Opposition is, why does she not support our efforts to modernize our energy infrastructure? She stands up in this House day after day opposing our efforts to build a stronger energy system, opposing our efforts to make the important investments to improve our system for 8,000 new megawatts of power, opposing our efforts to invest in our energy system to make it more reliable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Energy consultant Bruce Sharp of Aegent Energy Advisors says, “Simply switching householders ... to time-of-use pricing drives bills higher.” He adds, “Since nearly everyone in the province now has a smart meter that enables time-of-use pricing, the switch to time-of-use pricing is in itself a subtle rate increase.”

The government’s not-so-smart-meter scheme is not helping people save. It’s forcing them to pay more. To help offset the not-so-smart meter whammy, why will this government not do the right thing and take the HST off hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know a lot of folks are weighing in on this, and understandably; it’s an important issue of public policy, and families are concerned about what’s happening to electricity prices. But I think we can continue to have a tremendous amount of faith in the wisdom of our Environmental Commissioner. He said this: “There’s a lot of exaggerated claims that ‘prices are going through the roof.’ And I am worried this is going”—

Laughter.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They may want to laugh at the Environmental Commissioner, but I think we should pay heed to his advice here.

“And I am worried this is going to trump environmental concerns, and sacrifice long-term benefits for short-term political and financial gains.... It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity, or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted.”

I think the Environmental Commissioner offers some very sound and prudent advice, and I think we should also pay close attention to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s time the Premier started listening to the people of Ontario. That’s what his job is. Time-of-use rates were supposed to encourage consumers to use more power in off-peak periods, but since they were introduced in 2006, off-peak rates have increased by 46%. That is a fact. No matter how hard they

try, families are stuck paying more because of this Premier’s not-so-smart energy decisions.

He can actually take the sting out of hydro rates for people. He actually has the ability to do that by taking the HST off hydro. My question is, why will he simply not do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly what the leader of the third party wants to do is bring us back to where we were seven years ago and go back to that old-fashioned and unmodernized system that we inherited at that time.

Let me quote the Environmental Commissioner again. This isn’t us saying this; this is Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner, somebody who has a great deal of respect across this province. In referring to smart meters, he says, “They are necessary, absolutely necessary for the proper functioning and future functioning of the distribution system for electricity.”

We’re doing everything we need to do to move our energy system forward. We inherited a mess seven years ago. The NDP clearly have changed their position. They want to take this back. Ontarians don’t go backwards. We’re going forward to a modernized energy system that’s going to be more competitive and provide Ontario ratepayers with the efficiencies they deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are hurting, and it’s time for the Premier to realize exactly how much they’re hurting.

John Akermanis writes this: “It was bad enough that the smart meter doubled our hydro bill ... despite the fact we consumed less than previous periods.”

People aren’t saving money; they’re not saving energy either. The Premier can provide people with real and immediate relief by removing the HST from the hydro bills. I just need to know: What the heck is he waiting for?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: We’ve talked about this before, and I’m pleased to share with the leader of the third party again—I would suggest that maybe it should be in her next householder so she can ensure that her constituents indeed are being provided with the knowledge they should have on these issues—that the Ontario energy and property tax credit will benefit two thirds of Ontario seniors. It will provide 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians with relief on rising energy costs. It’s something that indicates that we really do understand that those families are going through challenging times, and we’re responding to those families.

At the same time, the leader of the third party owes those families the right to know where she stands, because we know what she opposes. She opposes our investing in an aging energy system. She opposes our efforts to create jobs and bring on more economic recovery. She opposes our efforts to clean up our energy system and make it more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. Tomorrow the auditor will release his report on consulting contracts at hospitals and local health integration networks, which will shed new light on the pattern of waste at eHealth and the LHINs. The Ontario PC priority is putting money back into front-line health care, but the Premier's priority is to make Ontario patients pay \$10,000 for Kathy Durst, the chair of the Waterloo Wellington LHIN, to take management courses at McMaster. Premier, why are Ontario families paying for your hand-picked Liberal appointee to take courses at university when the money should be spent on front-line health care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. There are a number of ministers who are commenting while somebody is asking a question, and it's important for the Speaker to be able to hear that question. I'd just like to remind those ministers to be respectful of the questioner.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It seems that the opposition continues to attack the LHINs. They continue to attack community members having a voice in the planning of their health care system.

I can tell you that we are committed to strengthening the LHINs. The LHINs are playing a very important function in our health care planning. They are, for the first time ever, responsible for the integration of health care. We are seeing tremendous results from the work that the LHINs are doing, especially when it comes to reducing, for example, alternate level of care patients—ALC patients—who are in hospital, who actually would be better served at home or outside of the hospital. The LHINs are doing that work.

I know the opposition thinks there should be no planning whatsoever for the over \$20 billion that is administered by the LHINs. I simply disagree with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier. I know that the Premier will be visiting Waterloo later this afternoon, and media and families in that community are looking for an explanation from the Premier of Ontario. During the period that Kathy Durst attended accountability and change sessions, Durst also billed the Ontario taxpayer and patients for her \$350 per diem. Ontario PC caucus researchers also uncovered information that revealed that the same chair of the Waterloo Wellington LHIN billed Ontario patients \$81,000 in per diems, even though the job was posted as part-time to the Ontario public. She doesn't see a single patient, nor does she provide any front-line care, so why has the Premier put his bloated health bureaucracy ahead of Ontario families and Ontario patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say, when it comes to health care the opposition simply does not get

it. What they need to understand is that the sustainability of our health care system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark, the member from Oxford, the member from Renfrew—and the honourable member from Nepean, who just asked the question. I would trust that she would listen to the answer. She certainly understands the standing orders, and if you're not satisfied, you can file a late show. But I would hope you would be respectful and listen to the minister's answer.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I was saying, the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark, I just sat down and you just opened up. I would just ask that you be a little more respectful of the Chair and respectful of the need for this House to do what it is supposed to do during this one hour allocated for question period.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister for Community Safety, the same message that I just delivered to the member from Lanark I'm delivering to you. It goes both ways in this place. Quite honestly, if we don't want to have question period, I'm quite happy to stand here and let the clock run, but I don't think that's fair to the people who are here watching or fair to any member of this House.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The party opposite has a \$3-billion problem. You see, they are committed to cutting \$3 billion out of health care. They are on the record as eliminating taxes that add up to \$3 billion so far, and they're just getting started. What they need to do is be honest with the people of Ontario and explain where the cuts are that are going to correspond—you cannot cut taxes and not cut services.

Their attack on the credibility of the people providing excellent care in this province is all about them trying to justify an unjustifiable cut to health care in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. In April 2009, I asked about access to physiotherapy following cuts at St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, Joseph Brant Memorial and West Lincoln. The health minister assured me, "Patients will get the care they need." But Chris Heinrich, a physiotherapist in Hamilton, tells a different story of patients who need care: "They are desperate. They have nowhere else to go. They have no one to turn to. They have no private insurance. They have nothing."

Can the minister advise Mr. Heinrich what he should tell these Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are working very, very hard to continue to strengthen health care in this province. We have measurable improvements. I think all members of this Legislature understand—if they talk to their constituency office staff—that we're not getting the calls we used to about needing access to a doctor or a nurse practitioner. Access to primary care is significantly better than it was when I was elected in 2003.

We've brought down wait times so that now people are waiting far less—over a year less than they were when we were elected in 2003. We've focused on reducing wait times. We've focused on improving access to primary care. We are turning our attention to quality. I am very encouraged by the progress we're going to make when it comes to improving the quality of care. It is only through those initiatives that we will be able to provide health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question was very specific about access to physiotherapy, a service that has been delisted and a service that most hospitals are cutting in trying to balance their books. It looks to me like the McGuinty government has tried to find some cost savings on the backs of the most disadvantaged Ontarians so that precious health care dollars can be poured into lobbyists, consultants or maybe even executive salaries.

But delisting and cutting physiotherapy is heartless. It makes no financial sense. When Ontarians can't access preventive care, they end up in the most expensive part of our health care system, emergency departments, costing the health care system way more.

Is the minister satisfied that she has finally eliminated access to physiotherapy for the most needy Ontarians in the Niagara region?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think all of us would agree that there are always going to be things we want to do more of when it comes to health care. There are always significant demands for more spending. When it comes to physiotherapy, we have improved access to physiotherapy for seniors. We're expanding physiotherapy services in our long-term-care homes. We're now providing OHIP-funded physiotherapy to approximately 138,000 seniors every year in this province. That's important service, important care, that they are receiving.

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At the same time, we are focusing on our highest-priority areas: bringing down wait times. In the Hamilton Health Sciences centre, we've been able to reduce the length of time people wait for hip replacement surgery by 277 days—that is a remarkable achievement; knee surgery is down 267 days; angioplasty—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOBBYISTS

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Last week, the member from Whitby—Oshawa introduced a motion on the use of

lobbyists, even when our government announced we're moving forward with legislation, a much stronger measure than a motion, to increase accountability and transparency. What I don't understand is how the member from Whitby—Oshawa could introduce a motion when her own leadership campaign manager, Andrew Boddington, took health care dollars for lobbying—and I hope she did tell him to stop. Her campaign manager's father, George Boddington, also a Conservative insider, lobbied on behalf of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust—stop the clock.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, the member from Wellington—Halton Hills knows the rules.

I trust that the honourable member is going to bring this around to a question that has something to do with the portfolio, because, as I'm hearing right now, it's not leading that way.

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate your counsel, Speaker, and I'll get to it right now.

You can't only talk about accountability; action is necessary and needed. The status quo cannot continue, regardless of what party we're talking about. Minister, I want to know what our government is doing to protect public money, to increase accountability, to improve transparency and to change the status quo that we're presently in.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Brant for asking the question. As the member has indicated, the Minister of Health will be introducing legislation to ensure that the front-line dollars actually go for front-line services.

We have made it very clear in the Legislature that using public money to lobby for extra dollars is not acceptable. I want to tell you that when the Conservatives were in power, there were about 14 hospitals that were using lobbyists. This practice, to us, is not acceptable, and we're going to put an end to this practice.

Last year, we introduced the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, and I'm very pleased to tell you that the expenses for consultants have gone down more than 54% since 2001 and 2002. We will continue to make sure that the taxpayers' dollars are used for the best purposes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the answer, and it talks to us about changing the status quo. We need to improve that, for all of this House's sake.

When it comes to keeping an eye on our precious taxpayer's dollar, we have examples from the opposition, who set the tone: anywhere, any time, any place. The status quo must change. So we're on the hook for a fishing licence; we're on the hook for a trip to Brazil; we're on the hook for McDonald's McNuggets. The practice continues—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to remind the member again: Get to the point of the urgency of the question, please.

Mr. Dave Levac: Thank you again for that guidance, Speaker. Again, I'll get to the point.

After all that has been spoken of, including any other trip that has been taken that we're now finding out has been happening inside of this place over the years, I want to know if the minister can tell us why the public did not know about these expenses and what he is going to be doing to stop the status quo and move us forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for his very insightful question.

As you are aware, last February I asked both the leaders—the leader of the third party and the Leader of the Opposition—to post their expenses—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe North.

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Economic Development. The member from Simcoe North. The member from Barrie. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Minister?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that, last year, you are aware that I asked the leaders of both the opposition and the NDP to post their expenses. This was supposed to strengthen the transparency and the accountability for taxpayers. Even the Leader of the Opposition has indicated—they both actually indicated their willingness to post these expenses. The Leader of the Opposition indicated that those expenses have been posted, but we actually haven't seen where these expenses have been posted. So I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition to tell us exactly where the expenses have been posted so that the public can actually see where those expenses are and what any of those expenses are.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier, and I'd like to thank the member from Brant for his great segue. Tomorrow, the auditor is set to release his report on consulting contracts in hospitals. Freedom-of-information records received by the PC caucus reveal that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: —Chatham-Kent Health Alliance handed out a sole-source contract after the Premier said these sweetheart deals were banned.

Premier, why did you backtrack on your sole-source contract ban?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This government is a government that has committed itself to increasing transparency—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): How could I anticipate that that was coming? The member from Durham will withdraw the comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We've committed ourselves to increasing transparency and improving accountability, and our record speaks for itself. We inherited a system where there frankly was not sufficient oversight in a number of areas and we have taken many steps, step-by-step, to improve that. And as you know, tomorrow I will be introducing legislation that will take the next step forward.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark, I'll ask that you withdraw the comment. Comments like that just are not useful to try and keep—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. It's also not helpful when the Speaker is about to ask a member to withdraw a comment to have interjections coming from the minister's side. Please withdraw the comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The contract was for \$30,000 to defend the plan to close the Wallaceburg emergency department. The deal was handed to Laurie Lashbrook. Lashbrook is a big donor to the McGuinty Liberals and to the health minister herself. She's also married to the former president of the federal Liberal Party and former head of the Attorney General's riding association.

Premier, how can you tell Ontario families that your priority is front-line health care when you're getting the Liberal family to help you close emergency rooms?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, this is now just going to the absurd when it comes to opposition attacks on our health care system.

Let me talk to you about some of the results from the actions we have taken. We have cut consulting expenditures in half, from \$656 million to \$304 million. We've saved \$67 million by converting over 1,500 consultant positions to regular full-time employees since 2003. We've brought in tough new procurement rules that all agencies and all ministries must follow. We've brought the following agencies under freedom of information: Cancer Care Ontario, universities, Hydro One, OPG and local public utilities. We've expanded the role of the Auditor General so that the Auditor General now can go into hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. We have witnessed several tragic fires in retirement homes over the past few years. Seniors have been seriously injured, suffered brain damage, and several have lost their lives. What advice has this minister and the past Minister of Community Safety received from the Ontario fire marshal about automatic sprinklers in all Ontario care occupancies?

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Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We need to give the honourable member the opportunity to answer his phone. I'd just remind the members again that telephones should not be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: There are a number of people in the province of Ontario and a number of members of the Legislature who are interested in fire safety in this province.

What I was able to do when I assumed the office of new minister, just as my predecessor did, was engage in some significant consultation with all of those who have a viewpoint. There are a number of recommendations that would come forward from all those individuals. We have those who are professional in terms of their fire-fighting service; there are others who are advisers; there are those who would talk about the building code and how it can be adjusted—and you know there have already been some adjustments there. But I found these consultations to be very valuable.

One of the other things I found, I must say to the member, is that nobody said there was one single thing that could be done that was best, but a variety of activities that might—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: When a fire safety plan is inadequate to ensure that residents can be evacuated and their lives protected, there are a few options, such as increasing the number of trained staff on duty, reducing the number of beds and residents, and installing automatic sprinkler systems.

On the record, did the fire marshal give advice to the minister—yes or no—that sprinklers would save lives? Did the fire marshal recommend that the government introduce legislation to require the retroactive installation of sprinklers in all care facilities?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I received a variety of recommendations from those people—including the individual to whom you've made reference—and from people right across the province on how things could be strengthened. I'm glad the member mentioned some of these components.

One of them, for instance, was having an adequate fire plan. A good example I want to give to him—and I think he would agree with me on this—is that in Niagara Falls, the fire service there has been very proactive in their inspections and in their working with those who have seniors' homes in Niagara Falls. And there are a number of others as well.

There are many recommendations coming forward. I'm very interested in those recommendations. I know the member himself has a bill before the House on Thursday. I think it would be very valuable once again that we discuss these issues, and I hope that we can find a total package that will work well in bringing about fire safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ELDER ABUSE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Today is Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario. I first raised this issue in this chamber back in 2004. The intention was to promote awareness about the importance of protecting seniors in Ontario from elder abuse. This chamber, in its collective wisdom, made October 19 Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario. It's a day for all of us who love and respect the seniors in our lives, whether they are parents, grandparents, friends, neighbours or just fellow citizens, to reflect on what we can do as individuals to help combat elder abuse.

Unfortunately, elder abuse remains an issue in our communities. Minister, what actions is this government taking to combat elder abuse in Ontario?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to thank the member from Willowdale for the question, and I congratulate him for all the great work he does in his community when it comes to seniors.

The safety and well-being of Ontario's seniors is a top priority for our government, and that is why we are the first government in the province's history to regulate retirement homes.

Since 2003, Ontario has invested \$4.2 million in elder abuse prevention, and that includes \$900,000 in annual funding to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. There's also \$415,000 from the Trillium Foundation for a hotline to assist seniors at risk of abuse.

The network is working to implement Ontario's strategy to combat elder abuse.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister, for outlining some of these actions that our government is taking to protect seniors from elder abuse. But it's also very, very important that this information is available directly to those affected in the first instance by this issue: the seniors themselves. Minister, how is the government raising awareness of elder abuse day, and how is our government helping seniors inform themselves so that they know what their rights and expectations should be?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The member is correct: Raising awareness on this issue is extremely important. We are supporting initiatives that educate seniors on how to protect themselves from abuse and fraud. In fact, in June of this past year, along with the Bank of Canada, we hosted a successful conference for seniors on financial abuse and fraud awareness.

We are also continuing to work with our federal, provincial and territorial governments to raise awareness of these issues. A great resource for our seniors is the new Guide to Programs and Services for Seniors in Ontario. We'll be sending copies of that guide to all members of the House today. It includes information on preventing elder abuse and has updated information and contact phone numbers. I encourage members of the House to use this guide and to make it available to our seniors. It is also available online at ontario.ca/seniors.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, will you release the list of children's aid societies that, last week, were asked to amalgamate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so pleased to have an opportunity in this House to speak about the transformational work that's under way in this sector to make sure that we have sustainable children's aid societies in the future. It is this government that has taken steps to ensure that we've increased funding to the highest levels ever—to \$1.4 billion. Last year, we put an additional \$26.9 million into the sector to stabilize high-risk CASs.

My commitment has always been that our focus should be on the kids and that we should ensure that our CASs are there to make sure that Ontario's children, the children that we have responsibility for, have a CAS that answers the phone and that opens the door when they need that help.

The work that the commission is doing right across the province is work that is going to ensure that we have sustainable CASs on a sure footing into the future to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The list, Minister: We're looking for the list.

Where is the transparency in this process? Letters were sent out last week to 53 children's aid societies, telling them they either had to consolidate services with a neighbouring agency or that it was business as usual. But there has been no announcement, no ministerial statement, no press release, no press conference. There hasn't even been a tweet.

Minister, why are you trying to hide these consultations from Ontario families?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It's very rich coming from that side of the House to lecture us on transparency, on consultation, on how to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean. The member from Oxford. The member from Halton, who's not in his seat.

Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We established a commission in late 2009 to do historic work that has not been done in this province. The work of the commission is done at arm's-length from the government so that they can travel across the province. In the last year, they've had more than 2,000 meetings.

They've issued some recommendations that we'll be taking a look at on how we can reduce some of the administrative burdens that exist on our CASs. They have also recommended that some CASs need to look at their operation.

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It is incumbent upon all of us to find a new way of doing business. We've asked three experts to travel the province and work in co-operation with CASs. If the member opposite had listened to the comments that I've publicly indicated, we're looking to work co-operatively with CASs. We've asked the commission to do that. We do that because—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ottawa families are finding it harder and harder to pay their hydro bills. Stephany Ward-Smith and her husband have two young children. She writes, "The cost of everything our family purchases has increased. The biggest hit was hydro, our hydro bill was \$743.03 for 62 days.... This has put us in a financial situation. We can no longer sustain status quo." Why won't the Premier take the HST off of hydro and give Ottawa-area families like the Ward-Smiths a break?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, as we've said previously today and as we've said for some time now, we understand that Ontario families have been through a tough time. We understand that the global recession had hit Ontario particularly hard and we understand that as we recover from that global recession, some Ontario families are still struggling. So we get it—and our energy rates are going up—that Ontario families have challenges. That's why we brought forward the Ontario energy and property tax credit, so that two thirds of Ontario seniors could receive relief; so that 2.8 million Ontarians, middle- and lower-income Ontarians, would receive relief.

This is over \$1 billion of relief that's being provided to those families. We care about those families. We're going to continue to work with those families. What we're not going to do is go back to where we were seven years ago, like the NDP wants us to do, and pull back on the important investments that those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Ward-Smiths aren't the only Ottawa residents struggling to make ends meet. Kathryn Barber writes, "The latest shocker came in the form of my hydro bill—\$161 for two months in a three-and-a-half bedroom apartment! I have never paid more than \$90 a month, so this was quite a jump and a hit on the budget. I'm feeling the pinch!"

When will the Premier finally start listening to people like Ms. Barber and Ms. Ward-Smith and agree to take the HST off of the hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: My question to the leader of the third party is when will the leader of the third party let all Ontarians know where she stands when it comes to making investments in our energy sector? She clearly doesn't support our investments to build 8,000 new megawatts of power into our system. She clearly stands opposed to investments to get out of dirty coal. We closed four more coal units just a few weeks ago, cleaning our air and providing better health outcomes for ourselves and our children. When she stands up here, day after day, opposing the important investments that are getting us there, she is standing dead set against our policies to get out of coal by the year 2014.

The NDP has clearly lost their direction. The NDP clearly has to take another look at where they're going here. The NDP is clearly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. My riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry recently welcomed 32 new affordable housing units into the community. I think it's an understatement to suggest that this \$2.2-million investment on the part of our province and the federal government will go a long way in ensuring that those who require affordable housing have access to it when they need it, but there is always more to be done with respect to affordable housing.

I receive many inquiries from constituents as to what programs and services are available to them, specifically when it comes to the renovation of older affordable housing units. Could the minister please outline what provincial programs are available for rehabilitation and renovation of older affordable housing units?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. This member truly understands the need for affordable housing in the province and in his riding.

Our government is truly committed to helping those living on low and fixed incomes, which is why after years of neglect by the previous governments, we are investing heavily into affordable housing programs. We have provided more than \$2.5 billion since 2003. These investments are helping us build and repair more than 200,000 units across our province. Part of that investment is our social housing renovation and retrofit program, a

\$704-million commitment which has been allocated to renovate and repair units across Ontario.

Unlike previous governments, we have a plan, a plan that we are going to implement, a plan that is meaningful to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: The constituents in my riding will certainly be pleased to know that there are programs available for the renovation of units currently occupied.

Again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: There has been much talk on all sides of the House regarding our government's long-term affordable housing strategy and what it means for Ontarians. In fact, today there are groups staging protests across Canada, calling on the federal government to make do with a national housing strategy.

Minister, in your earlier response you indicated a strong commitment on the part of our government to create and renovate affordable housing units across the province of Ontario. Through you, Speaker, could the minister tell us what Ontario's new strategy will mean and how it will complement what is already being done on the part of the province?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am very proud that very shortly, we will be introducing a long-term affordable housing strategy. We are the first government to introduce such a strategy. The Harris-Hudak regime's strategy was to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment.

I just want to remind the honourable member of a previous ruling I made regarding the use of names in the House. In that ruling I made reference to previous references that had been made in this House to the Harris government or the Eves government or the McGuinty government or the Rae government. The Leader of the Opposition has not been a leader of a government and I would just ask that that phrase not be used.

Please continue.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Well, the previous Tory government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North will withdraw the comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw that comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Unequivocally.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I will withdraw the comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The previous Tory government's strategy was to declare war on the homeless. This government's strategy is to declare war on homelessness. We are very proud that we're putting forth a long-term affordable strategy. Yes, there are protests across Canada today calling on the federal government—the federal government should have a long-term affordable housing strategy in place—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Premier. Because of the McGuinty government's disastrous policy of raising taxes, hiking electricity rates and spending our province into its largest debt in history, seniors and families will struggle to pay their electricity bill this winter. The Premier has no plan and has created an energy crisis in Ontario. Prices are going up while they ignore the issue of baseload capacity.

Premier, nuclear energy produces 50% of Ontario's power supply, but you have ignored it. The Darlington new build is part of the solution for reliable energy, but you have cancelled it. Your costly energy experiments are taxing seniors and families out of their homes.

I ask the Premier, what is your plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Acting Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll refer it to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very pleased to respond to this because last week, the Leader of the Opposition made it very clear what his disastrous nuclear policy would be. What he indicated to us last week is that he is a buy-at-any-price, impulse shopper when it comes to nuclear. That irresponsible approach would cost us billions and billions of taxpayers' and ratepayers' dollars if we were to take it.

This government believes in investing in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford. Member from Nepean.

Minister?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: If we listened to the advice of the leader opposite, today we would have been purchasing units—billions of dollars more than we would need to have paid. Nuclear energy is not something you buy on an impulse; nuclear energy is something that you have to make sure that you're taking every—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: The fact is that smart meters, HST and other profit incentives, including a failed Green Energy Act, have made energy less affordable in Ontario. The Darlington new-build program offers solutions: clean, reliable energy for the future. Durham region and the board of trade—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Agriculture will please come to order.

Mr. John O'Toole: A little bit of ethanol over there.

But Durham region and Clarington board of trade—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful, and I think maybe one of the—I'm not even going to say it. I just remind the Minister of Economic Development to please come to order. Comments that the member from Durham made as well, directed to a minister, are not

helpful. It's important that we all maintain as much respect and decorum as we possibly can in this House.

The time for question period has now ended.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to call your attention to the question today from the member from Brant directed to the Minister of Government Services. I would like to cite standing order 37(a) with respect to the urgent importance of the question, for starters, which you wondered about aloud yourself, and then I would also like to reference standing orders 23(h) and (i) with respect to making allegations against another member and/or impugning the motives of another member. I believe that this question was nothing more or less than a personal attack on another member of this House and should have been ruled out of order, and I would ask for you to make a ruling on that, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland on the same point of order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: May I join that briefly? One, I repeat my lament, oft stated to you, for a more strict enforcement or application of standing order 37(a) as to what constitutes a proper question to be put during question period, regardless of whether it's from opposition members or from government members. That's number one.

Number two: With all due respect, sir—and you have done yeoman service in terms of trying to create some order here in a very disorderly place, and I have the highest regard for that and I think I speak for all members. But it's increasingly apparent that there is a persistent flouting of your authority on a regular basis. Let me explain that. That is to say that you will, for instance, caution members who say something inappropriate or who act in a way that's inappropriate, and all that serves is to have their name in Hansard in a way that it wouldn't be—it identifies that they were here that day—because otherwise, there would be no record whatsoever of them being in the House or the chamber on that particular day.

I encourage you, sir, at some point, to use your full authority. I suspect it would only have to happen two or three times before there was a more consistent acknowledgement of your authority rather than a snickering flouting of it on a regular basis. I urge you to consider using that authority and being firmer as a means of creating a mood here, an environment here, that truly reflects your goal and what this place should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Brant on the same point of order.

Mr. Dave Levac: Yes, Speaker, it is on the same point of order. I believe I was within the standing orders. In terms of your decision on this point of order, should you rule, I will respond to that appropriately.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The acting government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Just to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have complete confidence in you. I would hope that you will review the proceedings as you always do, and if you have direction for the House that can be helpful to the decorum of the House, we'd certainly welcome that. I would say that I think your rulings to date have been fair and measured. As I say, we look forward to your comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member from Welland, the member from Brant and the acting government House leader for their comments.

First, specifically to deal with the point that was raised by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke regarding the question, I will remind the honourable member that yesterday I called one of his own members to order in a very similar vein within the line of questioning.

I take this to remind all members that we are here to deal with issues that are of great importance to the people of Ontario. But at any time, whether it is a question coming from the opposition or a question that comes from a backbench member of the government, when we start to attack the integrity of another member, that degrades the whole of this House. I would again urge you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, it's not helpful. I would prefer that you listen, please.

It degrades the dignity of this whole House. I would ask each of you, whether it is you or your staff who are writing those questions, whether you are in opposition or in government, to please not take it down to the personal level; to be cognizant of the fact that there is a job to do, that the opposition has a role to play to keep the government accountable, that the government has a role to play to try and talk of its various initiatives, and not lob these little grenades back and forth at each other. As you can see, what it does is it just brings down the whole tone and tenor of this House.

To the honourable member from Welland, I struggle with that standing order. As I have said before, I have read numerous questions from when your party was in government, when the opposition was in government and since this party has been in government. That tone of those questions has not changed. I can tell you, and I've said it before, that every Speaker struggles with that. As I've pointed out before, one member's pothole is another member's crater.

I will remind the honourable member that I did jump in yesterday during question period because I was very concerned over the direction of a government question and the way that it flowed.

My comment to the ministers is, having sat in that chair and having realized the role that a minister plays in developing those questions, to ensure that when those questions are written, they are of urgent public importance and that they are questions that are not being done to advertise a new government initiative.

This is a plea that I put out to the backbenchers: You've got enough issues in your own ridings that you need to deal with that, my goodness, you should be able to ensure that you come forward with an issue that is of utmost importance to your constituents.

I put this over to all the whips: Remember who you are here to represent.

I thank the honourable members. I too share the frustration.

I need to close with this: I have endeavoured to stay on top of the tone of this House. I think one of the things that honourable members should do sometimes is take some time out of their seat and go sit in one of these galleries. Sit down, and look down, and listen to what is going on in here. You don't catch it on television, I can assure you, but when you are sitting here you do.

I just beg the indulgence of all members to please do everything that they can. I certainly recognize we're in for a challenging year; I'm more than prepared, in my role as Speaker, to deal with that, and I will push back if needed.

I can tell you what makes the Speaker's job a heck of a lot easier, and that's the co-operation of all members. If you don't like the way things are, be part of the solution. And if you're concerned about the way members within your own caucus are dealing with things in this House, I would urge you to go to those honourable members as well.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: At the end of question period today, I had posed the initial question, and I had begun asking a supplementary question before I was interrupted by the Minister of Agriculture, when you stopped the proceedings and I did not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): When there are issues of loudness within this House, one of the challenges is trying to ensure that when an honourable member is expected to answer a question, that an honourable member can hear the question that was asked. I found it extremely difficult, and I do apologize. It was a question of timing. It was right at the end of question period. There was disorder that was taking place on both sides of the House. I tried to calm the House. Unfortunately, you were a casualty of the clock running out of time.

DEFERRED VOTES

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES ORGANISATIONS SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les organisations sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1152 to 1157.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Best, Margaret	Hudak, Tim	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Pupatello, Sandra
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Klees, Frank	Ramal, Khalil
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Leal, Jeff	Shuman, Peter
Clark, Steve	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Greg
Crozier, Bruce	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Yakubuski, John
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 78; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VAUGHAN HOSPITAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Thornhill.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: He was just telling me that it was the Shurmanator to start.

A few weeks ago, the NDP included the Vaughan Health Campus of Care in its list of hospitals using public dollars to hire lobbyists. But the NDP got it wrong, and its leader needs to stand up in this House and retract that. The truth is, Vaughan Health Campus of Care is not a hospital. They and we would like one, but as of now, that's just a wish.

Created in 2003, the Vaughan Health Campus of Care is a not-for-profit organization funded through private dollars. The specific goal is to bring a hospital to the city of Vaughan. Last week, at its annual gala, VHCC raised almost \$800,000, bringing its seven-year fundraising total to over \$6 million.

It's now seven years later, and how appalling that this Liberal government still has not committed to building this hospital—the same Liberal government that short-changes the 905 region on health care by some \$200 per capita.

The 2005 needs assessment study stated the obvious: Vaughan needs a local hospital. The land for the site at Major Mackenzie Drive and Highway 400 has been purchased and is ready to go. All that's needed now is a date for the shovels to go into the ground, yet the health minister has not even met with this group.

Vaughan has done its part. It's time for the McGuinty Liberals to step up and do theirs.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Our government is committed to preserving the environment in Ontario, and we've made a great deal of progress through our waste reduction initiatives.

Through our tires program, over 91,000 tonnes of tires have been diverted from disposal. We are meeting our targets on used tire diversion. In just eight months, we recycled and reused over 85,000 tires. This means that those used tires did not end up in our ditches, waterways and landfills.

Residentially, we are diverting more and more each year. Last year alone, almost five million households in Ontario participated in the blue box recycling program, diverting 870,000 tonnes of waste from landfills.

Through our expansion of the blue box program over the past seven years, we are approaching a 70% diversion rate in this area. We refuse to sit back and watch our environment decay and erode. We will not shirk our responsibility, leaving our children and grandchildren to clean up the mess. Instead, we are taking action to preserve this beautiful province for generations to come. Our waste diversion initiatives support Ontario's transition to a more sustainable, green economy. They help protect the environment and lead to a better future for Ontario.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As the winter approaches and the temperatures drop across the province, families will be turning on the heat. Devices such as gas furnaces, kerosene space heaters and fireplaces are all necessary during the cold months in Ontario but can pose a danger due to carbon monoxide.

That's why I want to remind all Ontarians to make sure that they have a working carbon monoxide detector in their homes. Carbon monoxide is a tasteless, colourless and odourless gas. It is often called the silent killer

because it gives no warning to its victims. Carbon monoxide is the number one cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America, and an estimated 414 Canadians died of carbon monoxide poisoning between 2000 and 2007.

Almost two years ago, a young family—Richard, Laurie, Cassandra and Jordan Hawkins—tragically lost their lives due to carbon monoxide poisoning in their Oxford home.

In order to prevent future tragedies, I introduced the Hawkins Gignac Act, which would make it mandatory for all homes to have a working carbon monoxide detector. A recent study by New York City's Mount Sinai School of Medicine found that the number of severe carbon monoxide poisoning cases significantly declined after the city brought in a law making detectors mandatory.

As you prepare for the winter, I encourage everyone to test their carbon monoxide detector and make sure it's working. If it isn't or if you don't have one in your home, I encourage you to get one today. Detectors are widely available, inexpensive, and they save lives.

JAKU KONBIT

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The 10th anniversary for the Jaku Konbit Academy based out of Ottawa Centre is in 2010. Jaku Konbit is a non-profit organization promoting African cultural identity, self-reliance, family and community development, and fostering relationships. In the Ga language of West Africa, Jaku means Africans, and in Haitian "Kreyòl" Konbit means working together and helping each other. Thus, Jaku Konbit literally means Africans helping Africans.

The organization runs three very good programs: the Jaku Konbit Academy, a summer camp and the Black Star Tutoring program. The academy is an educational and cultural program that provides stimulating and enjoyable African-centred education for children and youth of African and Caribbean descent. Their program is designed to build self-esteem, promote cultural awareness, and encourage and foster youth leadership and developmental skills as well as academic excellence and social responsibility.

Their summer camp for children and youth was launched in 2006 with a grant from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The camp was a huge success, and now I'm proud that Jaku Konbit's Greatness is Within You summer program continues with the ongoing support of the government of Ontario.

Jaku Konbit's Black Star Tutoring is a new initiative to provide tutoring services to children and youth of African and Caribbean descent who are experiencing difficulties.

On this very special anniversary, I would like to congratulate all the board of directors and especially Ken Campbell, who is the president of the program, for all the excellent work he is doing through the Jaku Konbit Academy.

DANA'S GOLDSMITHING

Mr. John O'Toole: As we all know in this House, this is Small Business Week. The resilience and ingenuity of our homegrown entrepreneurs in this province should be respected and celebrated every day. Whether it's a small home-based business or from Main Street or agri-business, we should support and recognize their achievements.

It's my honour to recognize Dana Smith of Dana's Goldsmithing, a local jeweller located in Port Perry in my riding of Durham. They have been chosen to become one of the few selected authorized retailers to carry Ontario's new Victor diamonds. The Victor mine, as we all know, is Ontario's first diamond mine, which came into operation in 2008.

1510

Thanks to the hard work of Ms. Smith and others in our diamond industry, for the first time, a customer can purchase a local diamond whose pedigree can be detailed to the square kilometre of its birth. In an age when diamonds have increasingly become the currency of oppression and civil war, Ontarians can now purchase a diamond with the knowledge that it was mined, cut and polished right here in Ontario. Rather than funding conflict, Ontario diamonds are helping to create jobs and grow our economy.

I'd like to congratulate Dana and her staff and wish her continued success in her small business during Small Business Week. All of us should take this opportunity: Whether it's our local farm operation that's diversifying or small business on the main street, let's celebrate small business in Ontario.

ATIKOKAN GENERATING STATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: In August this year, I had an opportunity to make an announcement in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan that was truly one of the most satisfying for me in my seven-plus years in provincial office. Atikokan is a community of just over 3,000 people two hours west of Thunder Bay. It was a gratifying moment to be at the Legion in Atikokan, with around 150 people, to formally announce that the Atikokan generating station will remain open and be converted to biomass.

This plant employs roughly 90 to 100 people and represents approximately 40% of the total municipal tax base. Closure would have had a highly negative effect on the homeowners and businesses of the community. Property taxes would have increased significantly and many businesses would likely have failed. Not only have we avoided that, but as a result of the conversion, we will retain jobs at the generating station, create 200 to 300 construction jobs, and quite likely the conversion will lead to the creation of a new forest-based industry in northwestern Ontario: biomass pellet production.

Subject to the power purchase agreement being negotiated between the OPA and OPG, this project should move forward shortly. I want to thank the mayor of

Atikokan, Dennis Brown; the community of Atikokan; the Atikokan Economic Development Committee and all who supported this effort over the last six years.

With this decision now in place and intensive mining exploration activity occurring, significant employment has occurred, and there is now renewed hope and optimism in Atikokan and the surrounding area.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Speaker, as you know, my first years in community politics involved the founding of the Ontario farm women's movement of the 1970s, with women like Diane Harkin and Dorothy Middleton of eastern Ontario.

Yesterday was Persons Day. Persons Day marks a very significant milestone that honours the struggle and celebrates the achievement of all Canadian women in developing true democracy. It is because of the struggles of those strong women that I stand in this chamber today. So when two members of the opposition rose in this chamber to hurl petty insults and disrespectful quips at one of our female colleagues on Persons Day, of all days, my heart sank. We are supposed to be leaders here, but it seems that some still don't get it. I was embarrassed for the women in the PC caucus, who I know have struggled, just as every woman in this chamber, to gain their rightful seat based on their own aptitude and strengths. Then I was angry: angry that there are still two parliamentarians who would so effortlessly try to take back all the progress that the women's movement has won over the past 81 years.

I fully expect that the members of this House—in fact, the women of Ontario—are waiting for the Leader of the Opposition to have the decency to apologize for the behaviour of his members, out of respect for all women legislators and for Persons Day in this House.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my pleasure to rise in honour of Small Business Week. Certainly I wish that there was more good news for small business coming from the government. I know that when I brought the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, which represents about 30,000 businesses in the GTA, to this government to talk about their opposition to the HST, the government wouldn't even meet with them. We had a press conference here and the government wouldn't give them the time of day.

Some 85% of their members opposed the HST; they still oppose the HST. They're hurting during the recession, and this government is doing absolutely nothing to help them. In fact, with the new shuffle in cabinet, they don't even have a Minister of Small Business anymore. So, happy Small Business Week; there is no longer a Minister of Small Business. I wish the Minister of Finance had heard his own member talk about trying to silence

women in this House. I wish he had actually observed her heartfelt words there.

Here's a suggestion: Have a Minister and a Ministry of Small Business, like we used to in this place; rescind the HST, at least on hydro—give small business a break; and actually listen and meet with small business representatives when they come to this House. That would be the honourable thing to do during Small Business Week, and that's certainly what small business in my community asks for.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. David Oraziotti: Our government continues to make investments we need to bring our electricity grid into the 21st century.

We're bringing added generation online and building a new industry with new jobs right across Ontario through our commitment to the green energy legislation. Our conservation initiatives and smart meters are reducing peak demands on our power grid, while allowing Ontario families to make more informed decisions about their electricity use. And yesterday, Ontarians got some good news, with a modest drop in electricity rates.

What's most important, though, is that we are building a robust and reliable energy grid so that even in a warm summer like the one we just had, Ontarians don't have to worry about the power going out.

That wasn't the case under the former Conservative government. Ensuring the most basic responsibilities—keeping the heat on and the refrigerators running across this province—was unmanageable. They deregulated our electricity sector, and then they ignored their responsibility with a reckless rate freeze cost to Ontario taxpayers of a billion dollars. They let demand for electricity skyrocket while supply steadily declined, and the result was blackouts and brownouts throughout the province.

Ontarians know our government is building an electricity system we can rely on. They don't want to turn the clock back to the summer of 2003, when the former government let the lights go out on millions of Ontarians.

I know in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, there are some fantastic new green energy projects being built.

We're very proud of the legislation that we passed in the province.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de

retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ministerial statements.

G20 PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT LA TENUE D'UNE ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE SUR LE SOMMET DU G20

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to require a public inquiry into government action and spending in connection with the G20 Summit / Projet de loi 121, Loi exigeant la tenue d'une enquête publique sur les mesures prises et les dépenses engagées par le gouvernement dans le cadre du Sommet du G20.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The bill requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint a commission under the Public Inquiries Act to inquire into and report on the decisions and actions of the government of Ontario and of Ontario's law enforcement agencies in connection with the G20 summit held in Toronto on June 26 and June 27, 2010.

Specifically, the commission is required to inquire into and report on whether the fundamental rights and freedoms of Ontarians were compromised, and how money was spent by the province in connection with the summit.

The commission is required to make recommendations on how to manage similar events that may be held in Ontario in the future and to submit an interim and final report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PENSION REFORM

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to stand today in the House to introduce the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. This bill, if passed, would move forward with commitments outlined in the 2010 budget to modernize Ontario's pension system.

1520

Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, received royal assent on May 18. It is the most significant

package of pension reforms to be made in Ontario in more than 20 years. Bill 236 builds on the recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions and helps the pension system adapt to economic changes while balancing the need for benefit security. Bill 236 was the first part of a multi-step process to update and improve the employment pension system.

Today, I'm pleased to speak to another significant step in the modernization process for pensions in Ontario, the Securing Ontario's Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. This bill proposes to make several amendments to the Pension Benefits Act. Our proposed legislation would strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvements. It would also provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans that meet specified criteria.

The bill also proposes to clarify pension surplus rules and provide a binding dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surplus should be allocated on windup. It would also provide a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by limiting exposure to the cost of benefit improvements that occur close to plan windup, and reduce risk to taxpayers in the future. Furthermore, this proposed legislation would strengthen regulatory oversight and improve plan administration.

The Securing Ontario's Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act is an integral part of this government's comprehensive plan for strengthening the retirement income system for all Ontarians. With this bill, the McGuinty government's reforms to the pension system will have responded to about two thirds of the 142 recommendations in the expert commission's report addressed to the Ontario government. The remaining recommendations will be considered for inclusion in future reforms.

This proposed legislation incorporates the input of extensive consultations, conducted across the province, with groups ranging from the Ontario Bar Association to the Association of Canadian Pension Management and the Ontario Federation of Labour. In fact, I've had the pleasure of hosting several round table discussions over the past years on the retirement income system with various stakeholders as part of our government's review of the options for improving retirement income security.

As you may know, on August 24 of this year, we released a technical background paper on this bill to solicit even more input from the stakeholders. The feedback we received was particularly helpful, and we will continue to encourage stakeholders to make their views known for making a stronger, more modern pension system in Ontario.

Ontario has also been playing a leadership role in advocating for pension reform at the national level. We continue to call for modest increases to the Canada pension plan so that all Canadians have greater access to retirement savings. Furthermore, we are working closely

with governments and industry to develop new and innovative ways for Canadians to save for retirement.

As our population ages, as our workforce changes and as our economic landscape shifts, we must modernize, innovate and adapt to ensure the continued health of our retirement income system. Over the next 20 years, the portion of the population aged 65 and older will nearly double, from 13.9% in 2009 to 23.1% in 2030, and continue to increase to 26.3% in 2050. This means that the level of incomes for the older and largely retired population will have an increasing impact on the economic and social well-being of the general population. It is therefore critical that we take the necessary steps today to preserve the quality of life for our future seniors.

The proposed Securing Ontario's Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, will continue our efforts in modernizing Ontario's pension system to balance the concerns of workers, retirees and employers. That is why I'm asking for the support of the Legislature on this important bill.

I'd like to point out in the gallery a number of public servants from Ontario that have been very involved in this process over a number of years and, like all Ontario public servants serve us very well.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to rise before this Legislature today to recognize national Citizenship Week. Citizenship Week represents an opportunity for all citizens to celebrate and reaffirm the values that unite us as Canadians.

Sixty-three years ago, Canada became the first country in the British Commonwealth to gain its own citizenship legislation. This represented a proud moment in our history as Canada matured from a nation of British subjects to a fully sovereign state. In fact, the first citizenship ceremony took place in 1947, when Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, an Ontarian, was sworn in as the first Canadian citizen under this legislation. Deeply touched while watching others become Canadian citizens, Mackenzie King wrote in his diary at that time, "Watching these different people singing the national anthem. Having in mind the background of their countries. How different their lives were in having come to Canada and seeing on the whole occasion something prophetic of the future."

Since that moment, more than six and a half million people have taken Canadian citizenship, and every year thousands of immigrants choose to become new Canadians; in doing so, they choose Ontario as their new home to start a new life, a better life.

This week, many more immigrants will take the oath of citizenship. By taking the oath of citizenship, new Canadians pledge to uphold fundamental rights such as freedom of religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association. They also pledge to fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship: respecting the rule of law,

participating in the democratic process, and honouring our heritage and our multicultural values.

Fulfilling the responsibilities of citizenship also means being an active citizen. An active citizen helps people in need, contributes to the community and volunteers for worthy causes. Our new Canadians embrace values especially dear to us here in Ontario, values that help build our society and enhance our quality of life.

Before I was elected to public office, I practised medicine as a humanitarian in countries around the world that were riddled with strife. Witnessing the hardship of others and their lack of human rights and freedoms gave me an even greater appreciation of Canada; nothing made me prouder than to say I was a Canadian.

We are a welcoming people. Ontario has welcomed people from over 200 different countries, speaking 130 different languages, and this diversity has become our strength. It has made Ontario one of the best places in the world in which to live, work and raise a family. Diversity has also made Ontario an example of how people of different cultures can come together in harmony as neighbours, friends and colleagues. This past Canada Day I had the privilege of attending a citizenship ceremony here at Queen's Park. It was a truly joyous and highly meaningful occasion, and I know that the citizenship ceremonies being held this week will be equally joyful.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to reach out to new Canadians and citizens to celebrate national Citizenship Week. Whether we are citizens by birth or by choice, we all have something meaningful to contribute to Ontario, to Canada and to each other. Let us never take for granted our privilege of being Canadian. Let us keep working together to make this province and our country more vibrant, more prosperous and more caring.

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Finance in the introduction of a new pension bill. The name of the bill is the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, and this is the second bill, as was mentioned by the Minister of Finance, to do with pensions. The opposition PC party did support Bill 236, the first bill. Of course, we haven't seen the bill yet—it's just been introduced—but I and my colleagues will be looking at it in detail. They tend to be of a highly technical nature, so we will be arranging for a briefing to learn about the details of the bill.

I suspect it will deal primarily with defined benefit pension plans. As the Minister of Finance pointed out, that affects roughly one third of the population. There are two thirds who don't benefit from defined benefit pension plans. But certainly where they do exist, if you're working for a company you're counting on that defined benefit pension plan. The government should have rules in place so that the plan is fully funded and so that those people who are counting on the plan will have the support from it that they expect to have.

1530

This morning, as I was getting ready to leave, CBC Radio's Michael Hlinka, the business commentator, was talking about the unrest in France, where they're changing their retirement age from 60 to 62, I believe, and there are strikes on the street. He pointed out some of the challenges here in Ontario in the public sector. He made a point of saying that the teachers' pension plan has only one and a half working teachers for each retired teacher at this point, and obviously that's a huge stress. In fact, in this year's budget there was some \$500 million that was contributed from the general taxpayers toward the Ontario teachers' pension fund.

If we're going to have defined benefit plans, then the rules should be such that they're fully funded. We'll be having a close look at this. I suspect that what's going to happen with the tighter rules is that more and more businesses will move, as they are, toward defined contribution plans as time goes on.

It's also interesting that the government just yesterday introduced a motion that seems to be mainly political in nature, which we're going to be debating tomorrow and I will speak to more about tomorrow. That seems to be a very political motion to do with pensions.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to respond to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on behalf of Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak, who holds the shadow portfolio post, one that I occupied for a couple of years.

I must say, in echoing the sentiments of the minister, that I have been to a couple of citizenship ceremonies, the swearing in of new citizens of Canada, and I never thought, when I went to my first one, that it would be quite as moving as it is. It's history for all of us in all of our families, and sometimes very recent history.

This is a celebration of the transition through immigration, from newcomer to Canadian citizen. In my own riding of Thornhill, there are about 150 nationalities represented, so I know whereof I speak. It is not an easy transition. Most of us know this from families, parents, sometimes brothers and sisters, and sometimes, in this Legislature, our own memories of ourselves and our own history.

Not enough is being done in Ontario now to unlock the potential of newcomers in professions and trades that are so valuable to the economic future of the province. Ontario has always been a province with a reputation of culture and opportunity, and now I'm worried that that reputation is slipping. As Ontario struggles to recover from recession, a new generation of leadership must do more than the last to tap into the education, energy, skills and experience of the people we draw to our province. We must do everything we can to help those who come to Ontario to transition from faraway dreamer to newcomer to Canadian citizen.

In May, Ontario PC leader Hudak introduced the Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, 2010, to

help with that transition. If passed, the bill will lower the threshold for any immigrant investor who opens a business outside the GTA. It encourages better integration through tax incentives to employers who pay for English- or French-language training to newcomers. It addresses the lack of transparency in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act and Regulated Health Professions Act preventing newcomers from pursuing careers in their field of training.

The goal of our government should be the same as that of newcomers—succeed, have fair access to the professions they are trained in, help promote and grow our province and economy, and eventually take the oath and indeed become Canadian citizens.

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm responding to the pension legislation by the finance minister.

The government-appointed expert Harry Arthurs came up with a number of good suggestions regarding strengthening the existing pension system. Unfortunately, a number of his most important recommendations are nowhere to be seen in this legislation. Here are three that absolutely should have been in this package and aren't.

First, at only \$1,000, the level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the pension benefits guarantee fund is completely inadequate. We believe that over time, the monthly guarantee covered by the PBGF should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500, as Arthurs recommended, to reflect the effect of inflation on the original maximum of \$1,000, which has been in place since 1980.

While the NDP agrees that the basis on which the levy could be paid by plan sponsors is a complex matter and that a phase-in period would be necessary, we are extremely disappointed that this key Arthurs recommendation is nowhere to be seen in this first package of pension reform legislation.

Secondly, the NDP supports the Arthurs recommendation for establishing an Ontario pension agency. We believe that pooling, administering, investing and dispersing stranded pensions could be an important role for the agency. In our opinion, an Ontario pension agency would pretty much solve the problem that Nortel pensioners face. AbitibiBowater, Canwest Global Communications: All could benefit from an Ontario pension agency.

Finally, Arthurs recommended the adoption of emergency indexation provisions. In the event of another surge in inflation, fixed pension benefits will, we know, be inadequate. At the same time, inflation may deliver high nominal returns to pension funds. High nominal returns due to inflation should not be permitted to produce high surpluses at the expense of fixed income pensioners. Now is the time to address this concern with limited indexing provisions, before inflation becomes another serious issue.

To give the government credit, there are a number of solid provisions in the legislation. Most of the constructive proposals follow closely the recommendations of Professor Arthurs. It's too bad that by ignoring the three most important recommendations, the government threw away an opportunity to pass some really landmark pension legislation.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm responding to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on the Citizenship Week. Of course, I applaud our recent citizens and have taken part in many ceremonies to welcome them.

I would ask my friend the minister, however, because he is a humanitarian, to answer a few questions on behalf of the McGuinty government, because these are questions that immigrants in my communities are asking.

Why does it take three months to get OHIP coverage for a new immigrant when they need it most, often when they first land?

Why does it take about 10 years to get accredited if you're a medically trained foreign professional, when a million Ontarians need a family doctor? I have one—Dr. Ali, let's call him—who goes back to Iran for six months to make money so he can keep his family here for the other six months. Why does it take that long?

Why do organizations like CultureLink—I went to their annual general meeting last night—have to come year after year, cap in hand? Why do they not get stable funding from this government?

Why do we live in a province where live-in nannies, caregivers and migrant workers are forbidden to unionize? Why do we deny them what is essentially, I would contest, a right of any worker?

Why do we turn a blind eye to the kind of employment standards violations that beset the immigrant community more than anyone else? In fact, in our own ministry buildings, we have cleaning contractors who hire recent immigrants who don't speak the language and don't know their rights; who are essentially paying less than minimum wage to them for cleaning their own government buildings by calling them "contractors." Why does my friend allow this, and why does the McGuinty government turn a blind eye to this?

Why have they turned a blind eye to the kinds of inspections that we've asked for from the Ministry of Labour? It's taken deaths in the construction trade to get the Ministry of Labour to go out and actually inspect the number of construction sites, many of which use illegal immigrant labour, people, again, who don't know their rights and don't know what their government should be doing for them.

All of these issues could have been addressed in the last seven years. All of these issues would put some meat to the bones of Citizenship Week. Instead of just being an empty gesture, it would actually have some meaning for the people who are bringing so much, and bring so much continually, generation after generation, to this province.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great number of people from the great riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, represented by the Speaker, who is unable to read the petitions. On his behalf, I'd like to read it into the record. It's a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

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"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'll affix my signature.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

As I agree with this petition, I'll sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are the parents, educators and friends of students in the Peel region public school system; and

"Whereas Peel students have historically received less funding per pupil per annum when compared to their peers in other district school boards and, in particular, have inadequate special education resources; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario are entitled to equal opportunities in education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To recognize and provide for the \$18-million learning opportunities grant owed to Peel students;

"Implement measures to ensure ongoing funding is based on current census data and other key demographic indicators of student needs to ensure that Peel students receive a fair share of provincial education funding."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Marie-Josée.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is for provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal

shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I couldn't agree more with this petition and I will give it to legislative page Ffion to be delivered to the table.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have a petition here for the provincial Legislature on provincial oversight of the OSPCA, and I owe a debt of gratitude and acknowledgement to Lynn Perrier of Thornhill for bringing this number of petitions to my office.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and present it to page Anika.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm going to read a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations, etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

Again, I agree wholeheartedly with this, will affix my signature and give it to Priscile to be delivered to the table.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Deborah McCormick from 791 King Street West, Oshawa, Ontario, who has a real interest in kidney disease and ways to prevent it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Emmett.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

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"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

I have affixed my signature and given it to page Marie-Josée, as I am in complete agreement.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I have a petition:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

Thank you.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me by Sandra Lovell of Ayr and Lynn Perrier of Thornhill.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I've received more petitions to do with paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course, I support this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 18, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I find it strange that the Liberals didn't want to pick up the mantle on this debate.

It's the good government bill. We had a bill of good government prior to this; we had one last year. It seems to be a regular thing that they bring in good government bills.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's an oxymoron: good government by a bad—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's almost as the member from east of Toronto says—it's Durham? I think it's the member from Durham, isn't it?

Mr. John O'Toole: Durham, yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from Durham says that it's lack of good government, really, that this government has been known for.

It was interesting to listen to the member from Willowdale rant on and on, and on and on, yesterday. His rant was about how the opposition did not go to the briefings for this bill. I think that it'd probably be worth clarifying something in that area. My staff was in touch

with the Attorney General's office, and we informed the Attorney General's office that we would like a briefing if we had questions after having reviewed the legislation. As you can appreciate, this legislation dealt with seven different ministries and, I think, 70 different pieces of legislation, so it did require some review even before you went to a briefing on it. After reviewing the legislation, we didn't really have a lot of questions, but we understood the changes even if they were on matters technical in nature.

I'm not sure if the member from Willowdale would like the opposition to attend a briefing even when it is unnecessary; however, I'm of the view that to waste the limited time that we have on hard-working bureaucrats is actually an example—a pretty definitive example—of bad government. In fact, it's a typical example of how this Liberal government operates: lots of red tape which leads to waste, waste and more waste. Lots of red tape. They just love red tape.

Rest assured, when necessary we have attended and will continue to attend briefings. But as the member from Beaches–East York mentioned, there are a number of times when these briefings are truncated by the Liberal government; in other words, broken up in the middle and there's an adjournment while somebody leaves or somebody comes. It takes up a lot of our valuable time. Our valid questions are quite often silenced by Liberal staff. In other words, when we're in a briefing there are also Liberal staff there from the leader's office or the minister's office, and when we ask the civil servants—the people who are technically aware of the bills—a question concerning the meaning of the bill, the Liberal staff may say, “You don't have to answer that,” and they do that on the basis of government confidentiality. Of course, that kind of defeats the purpose of having a briefing on these questions in the first place. If we were discussing a bill that was truly about good government, we wouldn't see these kinds of things happening.

A great example occurred after the Good Government Act, 2009, was introduced, while we pored through that massive piece of legislation. When we got to the briefing we had question after question, because there were lots of controversial changes in that Good Government Act, but we were informed and ready for the briefing. We didn't need PowerPoint presentations regurgitating the explanatory notes; we needed a solid briefing. The bureaucrats were helpful, but a number of times our questions were silenced by the Liberal staff. That was not very helpful. The member from Willowdale may want to speak with staff in the minister's office if he is concerned about providing helpful briefings to the official opposition, and I would thank the member in advance for taking that action—not that I think it's going to happen. But if it did happen, I would thank the member in advance for that.

The Attorney General, of course, had a few words to say on this particular briefing. He began by saying that “The purpose of a good government bill, among other things, is to bring together those legislative or enabling initiatives that by themselves are not substantive enough

to form a piece of legislation—that's first....” Secondly, he said that the purpose of an omnibus bill is to bring together that which is “necessary and important for the better functioning of either other acts or society in general....” A little nebulous, but that was the second point. Thirdly, the purpose of an omnibus bill is to bring together points “that tend to be—today's debate may prove the exception—less controversial than some pieces of legislation.”

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It's interesting, because if we look back to last year's Good Government Act, there were two new pieces of legislation in that bill. In fact, I spoke at length about my concerns with this government's approach in that Good Government Act.

Ironically, one of the new acts was the accountability act. That was an entire act that was included in the good government bill. This would preclude, or hold up to question, the Attorney General's first point, when he said they're “not substantive enough to form a piece of legislation” on their own. Last year's Good Government Act held two complete pieces of legislation on its own.

Ironically, one of those new acts was the accountability act. The majority of that act has not yet been proclaimed. Why they had to rush this through in an omnibus bill, purportedly for the saving of time—yet here we are, over a year later, and that act has not yet been proclaimed. I think it puts into question how well this government is organized as far as how it organizes its bills that it brings before the House. Again, in the guise of good government, it hides the reality of bad governance, bad planning and bad management.

This actually brings me to the Attorney General's third point. He said that good government acts are of a less controversial nature. That seems to be a controversial statement itself because we've seen a lot of bad government over the last six or seven years, and we've seen it in so-called good government acts.

It's true that this government likely doesn't need any more controversy than it's already created for itself over the last six or seven years. We know that the HST was an extremely controversial act. Of course, the HST was brought in this past July 1. It was brought in, having never been part of a government platform. We didn't see it in the 2007 election platform of the Liberals. They had to have known that it was part and parcel of their program going forward, yet they didn't choose to share that with the Ontario electorate.

In my mind, to bring in a massive restructuring of the sales tax act in Ontario, without extensive consultation during a campaign with the people of Ontario—there is no way that I can construe that as being good government. That is—I want to use a word that the Speaker has said isn't appropriate. I'm sure there's another word that I can think of—maybe not. But you can draw your own conclusions about a government that brings something in without first discussing it with the people of Ontario during an election. It was kind of a bushwhacking—perhaps I can use that term—of the electorate.

The smart meters are something that has been disguised. They haven't been fully discussed. A lot of the downside of the so-called smart meters wasn't available to people. With their implementation, we have seen our worst fears come true. Even those people who upset their lives, use electric power at low seasons of the year, low times of the day, are seeing vastly increased electricity bills. The so-called cheap rate or off-peak rate of 5.2 cents a kilowatt hour, I think it was—that was just approved yesterday, to move to 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour, a massive 1% decrease in price—won't affect anyone's lives. But even that rate is significantly higher, at 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour, than the 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour that our government had in place in 2003, when the Liberal government came into office.

So it was a sad thing to see that these smart meters—I think they come from a foreign manufacturer. It would be interesting for this government if they had had a decent amount of research and had had a look at where they could find smart meters that actually work—that are consistently available and work well.

There are some Ontario manufacturers of smart meters. In fact, the largest installation of smart meters in the world, I believe, is taking place in Shanghai, China, and those smart meters are being supplied and installed or implemented by an Ontario company. So the company is smart enough and good enough to work in China but apparently wasn't able to make a bid on these smart meters in Ontario.

Another example of a government action that wouldn't really qualify for good government would be the Oakville power plant. The Oakville power plant was something that we railed against for the past two years at least. I think, when it came in, that George Smitherman—I think I can use his name, because he's no longer a member of the Legislature and he doesn't have a riding to refer to him by, so I will refer to him by name as Mr. George Smitherman—was the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure at the time that the Oakville plant was approved to go onto a piece of land that was far too small; far too near to other significant populations of families and single-family homes; far too near to schools and seniors' homes; far too near to a GO rail line passing, I think it was, seven metres from the completed plant—or it would have been; and far too near to the QEW in cases where there was some danger involved.

The TransCanada company that got the approval to build the plant was ongoing in filling out their papers and getting their house in order to build this plant. They had received the contract. In a total turnaround, in a total flip-flop, the government has decided to not proceed with that plant. That, in itself, wasn't a bad decision; the bad decision took place when the plant was approved for that location. But in making that first bad decision and then, a year and a half or two years later, making the good decision to cancel it, you have chewed through something between half a billion and a billion dollars of taxpayers' money that the proponent, TransCanada Pipelines, will be asking the government to cover for their costs of breaking that contract.

The Minister of Energy has talked at length during question period about the rumoured amounts of how much money this is going to cost. A prudent manager dealing with good government would not have made that decision without knowing what the financial impact would be on the people of Ontario, whose tax dollars they represent. But apparently, this government doesn't care what the taxpayers of Ontario are going to pay in damages for this plant.

Most politicians know that when there's an absence of fact, rumours will fill the void. There's a huge lack of facts dealing with the Oakville power plant. We don't know what those discussions have been. We don't know how much money the government is willing to ante up in order to save the seat of its Oakville member. Make no mistake: The reason that the people of Ontario are paying half a billion to a billion dollars is to save one seat in the town of Oakville. The member for Oakville—we can call him the half-billion-dollar man or we can call him the billion-dollar man, but I can ask the government: If the price to save a seat in the province of Ontario is going to be half a billion dollars and we're a year out from the election, I can tell the people of Ontario that this is going to be a very, very expensive election on their tax dollars. It's going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario a lot of money, and, I would say, to no avail, because the taxpayers of Ontario understand very clearly that wasting their tax dollars is not something they want to see happen. They've seen it happen in Oakville. They will reject this government and they will reject the way in which this government operates.

We've also seen bad government operating in the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. We saw that OLG come into existence when the government spent about \$600,000 to change the name of the OLG. It used to be called the OLGC, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., but the government in its wisdom changed the name to the OLG. They took off the C, and it created a new logo. The fees to the people who developed this tremendous piece of public relations, along with the reprinting of stationery and resigning all the facilities—that cost the people of Ontario about \$600,000. This was a complete waste of time and a complete waste of taxpayers' dollars.

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That's how this organization was born. The people who work there obviously got the impression that money was not really a top priority for this government. Good government didn't revolve around looking after taxpayers' dollars. So we saw scandal after scandal.

We saw one scandal where people had exorbitant holidays and travel. People had exorbitant cars, limousines. People had exorbitant expense accounts, expensive meals and travel. We saw all of these things happen at the OLG, and then barely a year later we saw the same thing repeat itself. This government didn't learn from its mistakes. It didn't have good oversight of these organizations, and that certainly is not good government.

We also saw another example of good government—my goodness, these examples just go on and on. I'm

surprised that the government doesn't learn from their mistakes, but it seems this government is incapable of learning from its mistakes.

Another example was the eco fees. The eco fees were not talked about during the campaign in 2007. They were not even promoted in the six months prior to their introduction. They were simply introduced on July 1 under cover of the HST introduction. People began to see them appearing in retail stores where they went to buy products that attracted this tax.

The concept of the tax isn't what bothers me. What bothers me—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm working down the list.

The concept of the tax isn't what bothers me. What bothers me is the way it was snuck in under the cover of darkness, and that certainly is not good government. The government has to realize that it's there at the pleasure and for the benefit of the people of Ontario, and to sneak these things in under cover of darkness under the HST is not what the people of Ontario expect from a duly elected government of the day.

So the eco fees, of course, were cancelled on about July 20 or so. Three weeks after they were introduced, they were cancelled with the promise that they would come back in 90 days with a better program and one which they could promote to the people of Ontario so that they would see the benefits of an eco tax.

Well, 10 days ago, the government decided that it really couldn't do that; it really didn't know how to accomplish those goals. So they announced that they were going to cancel the eco tax forever. They weren't going to bring it back. They did have a little caveat in there, if you look at the press release—a little wiggle room there. It said, "We're going to study the matter further, towards the effect that we may bring it back later."

Given the operation of this government, I can tell you that that eco tax will be back. It'll be back in a storm, and it'll be back the day after this government gets elected, if that peril should ever befall the citizens of Ontario—more taxes to come because this government has never seen a tax increase that they haven't fallen in love with.

Of course, the history of this government has shown us that to say good government acts are not controversial is in fact tremendously inaccurate. That was the third point that the Attorney General made when he said that the history is that the good government bills were brought in especially for regulations or many acts that are not controversial, and in fact that is tremendously inaccurate.

Another new act the government introduced in the Good Government Act, 2009, was filled with controversy. I'm speaking about the new Public Inquiries Act, and I spoke about my concerns that this government had snuck into this act, that Good Government Act—and the implications of those changes.

My concerns were echoed at committee when the member for Thornhill asked, "If I characterize this"—"this" being the changes to the Public Inquiries Act—"as

highly objectionable, from your perspective, that would be a good synopsis." The answer was, "That is a fair synopsis." That is a fair synopsis: That was their answer.

Funny enough, the new Public Inquiries Act hasn't been proclaimed yet either. There was a suggestion that it was put in the Good Government Act, 2009, because it was desperately needed, and this bill was going through in a non-controversial fashion—which it did not, but the government was hoping that it would—and it was desperately needed for good government in Ontario. Yet here we are, over a year later, and it hasn't been proclaimed.

When you say you desperately need something because of good government and then you don't proclaim it for a year, I wonder, what does that indicate to the people of Ontario about the government that they elected in 2007? I think it's given them some pause that perhaps this government doesn't have the same commitment to walk the walk when they have indeed talked the talk.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: They've changed.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They have changed dramatically, as the member from Cambridge just pointed out. They have changed dramatically, and that has been a sad day for Ontario.

So it's difficult for me to really accept this flip-flop as a genuine expression of the Attorney General's view of what good governance is in the province of Ontario.

I wouldn't be surprised, however, if this act is the exception to the rule, in light of the scandals trashing the government today. A truly good Good Government Act would be a great tactical diversion. In fact, with the majority of these changes being simple housekeeping measures, perhaps it would be more properly titled the diversion act.

The member for Welland, with the third party, commented on the Justices of the Peace Act. I want to say that the member for Welland is a very competent orator. I hate to give the opposition in either party too many compliments because it tends to end up in campaign brochures during election time, and the person from my party, whoever that might be, who is running against the member for Welland might be upset with me when he sees that I have complimented the member from Welland. But he does have a keen legal mind, and I would take his comments quite seriously, when the member for Welland brought up an interesting concern about changes to Justices of the Peace Act. Reading the act, it appears the Attorney General is currently able to request the review of applications.

However, while I support this change to the process of appointing JPs, justices of the peace, I hope we will hear more at committee about this concern. It isn't beyond this government's ability to try to sneak in their friends under the veil of a Good Government Act. I think we can look at a number of cases where this has happened, not the least of which—and perhaps the granddaddy of all—is the eHealth scandal, where Liberal-friendly consultants have made truckloads of money from the government.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member for St. Catharines asked, "What about the Tories?" I would suggest to him that the Tories, if and when anything was done of an unjust nature like that, which I would be surprised to find examples of, would be minuscule compared to \$1 billion, most of which went to consultants. That is the granddaddy of all ripoffs of the Ontario taxpayer in the history of Ontario.

1620

Another one of the good government acts that this government brought in was smart meters, and of course they're tremendously flawed. We have examples of people who have gone onto smart meters, used their electrical appliances at night through timers or getting up in the middle of the night to do their washing and drying and using off-peak-hour rates as much as possible, and yet there they are—I see the member for Peterborough counting carefully; I'm keeping track; you're okay—finding their electricity bills going up 10%, 15%, 20%. Twenty per cent is not uncommon. It is not a rarity to have a 20% increase when your smart meter kicks in. This is not the way to conserve electricity. This is a way of just gouging the consumers. It's certainly not smart government—another example where this government hasn't had the ability to use its power for the betterment of the people as opposed to gouging them with electrical rates.

Talk about gouging: I go back to the Oakville power plant. The Oakville power plant is going to cost this government and the people of Ontario many hundreds of millions of dollars in cancellation fees. That plant is worth \$1.2 billion, and I believe, legally, that Trans-Canada Pipelines—the proponent that was going to build the plant—has the ability to recapture most of that money, if not all of that money. The government has failed to tell us how much the penalty is going to be, and the government knows full well that when there are voids in facts, rumours will fill the mill.

We have consulted with lawyers who are involved with these kinds of cases and they suggest that the minimum would be half the rate or very close to it; that's half a billion dollars. This is "billion" with a "B." That's a lot of money by anyone's count. That's almost half the entire Ontario budget gone, wasted for naught, because George Smitherman put that plant in Oakville—the second \$1 billion, perhaps, that George Smitherman wasted. The results of the election next Monday will be interesting, when George Smitherman has proven himself to be incompetent at managing huge amounts of money, having wasted so much money on the eHealth scandal, having put this plant in Oakville. The people of Toronto, I'm sure, will consider these things when casting their ballots next Monday.

The Oakville power plant is one that's very close to me; it's close to my riding. Some of the constituents in my riding would be affected by it, and therefore I was very much opposed to this plant going in this particular location in Oakville. I was pleased when it was cancelled. What upset me was that it was approved in the first place

in such a precarious position. That was certainly not good government. That was indeed very, very bad government.

This government has never met a tax increase or a fee increase that it hasn't loved. We've talked about the OLG—it used to be the OLG and now it's Ontario Lottery and Gaming, OLG—and how much it cost to change that name. This government has found that there's a way, a clever and very imaginative way, to fuel the spending habits of Ontario's gaming people, those people who play horse races or gaming or lotteries, and that is to have online gambling and now poker lotto. You not only doubled the price of the 6/49 ticket from \$1 to \$2, but you brought in the Lotto Max one for \$5. That gets people's pockets emptier quicker.

The OLG bureaucracy has ballooned to over 20,000 people. To the backbenchers over there: Did you know that there are 20,000 people working for OLG? Does that surprise you? There are 233 executives with OLG making over \$100,000 a year—233.

Mr. John O'Toole: Publish the list.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Actually, the member for Durham, we do publish the list every spring, and we'll look forward to seeing whether that number of 233 increases next spring or decreases. But I don't know how OLG hires 20,000 people after back-to-back scandals at OLG and five—count 'em, five—CEOs. Premier McGuinty can't be trusted to oversee the expansion of new gaming programs, products and revenue streams. This Premier has not earned the trust of Ontarians to oversee that kind of increase in revenue streams.

As recently as June, the Auditor General confirmed millions more were wasted on perks and entitlements by OLG bureaucrats—millions more. As of last June, it was confirmed.

The Auditor General, the people's auditor, should be the friend of government. He comes in and points out those areas of the government—the government is a massive organization. The auditor is the one who comes and points out to the government, "These areas need your attention." All too often, those areas are ignored by this government, and they were ignored again at OLG.

Let's be clear: Premier McGuinty's government simply needs more money to pay for his reckless spending and his bloated bureaucracies. The bureaucracy has increased in this province to the point where more than a million Ontarians earn their money, one way or another, from the taxpayers of this province. Our labour pool in Ontario is something on the order of seven million people, and a million of them are paid for through the taxpayers. That ratio should be very, very concerning to any government that wants to remain competitive in the North American job pool. That is something that this government should spend a lot of time on.

There were auto insurance reforms that took place. My goodness. Again, this government took the easy road. Ontario's families have already—their budgets have been stretched to the limit by the HST, hydro costs and now auto insurance. In auto insurance, people are simply

paying more and getting less. It's clear that Ontario families cannot afford this government anymore.

Families are already paying more for the privilege of owning a car with the 8% HST tax grab on gas. They're also paying for so-called insurance reforms, which moved some words around in Ontario's auto insurance legislation but failed to address the most significant problems facing the industry—problems such as fraud, problems such as frivolous litigation, problems such as ambulance chasing and attempts to game the system.

Those are the things that would bring costs down in a very real sense while providing good coverage. Those are the things that we did in 2002, when we brought in a new insurance act that actually reduced the price of insurance by about 10%, 11% in the province of Ontario while increasing coverage—or, at the very least, leaving coverage the same.

Real savings on auto insurance premiums for Ontario families start with cracking down on those who are cheating the system and running up premiums for honest, responsible Ontario drivers. How often, in your constituency offices, have you heard somebody come in and say, "I have been driving for 30 years. I have no accidents, I have no tickets and yet I am paying over \$1,000 a year for insurance." I've heard those complaints. You've heard those complaints. I see some of the backbenchers nodding their heads. They've heard those complaints—and there's another one nodding his head.

1630

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We're nodding off.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member for Sudbury says he's nodding off. Well, nod off if you will, sir, but you should be paying attention because the people of Ontario are paying attention. They're paying attention to their electrical bills. They're paying attention to their insurance costs. They're paying attention to the HST. They're paying attention to all of the things that this government has increased the cost of. They are paying attention, sir; they are paying attention extremely well and they will let you know at the appropriate time how they feel about it.

Mr. Paul Miller: How do you really feel?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member for Hamilton asked me how I really feel, and I can tell you that how I really feel is that I am very, very upset. I have sat in this House since 1995 and I have seen this province lose 25% of its manufacturing sector. I have seen this province become less competitive in the Great Lakes basin against states in the United States that are—even those states which are not doing very well we can't compete with anymore because of our increased costs. I've seen industry in this province be forced out of this province and go to other provinces or to another country. Once the heartland of industrial development, once the best province in Canada, the richest province in Canada, the most progressive province in Canada has ended up at the bottom of the pack, and I can tell the member from Hamilton that I am very upset about it.

He's nodding his head. He agrees with me on this. We come from different parties and we have different ap-

proaches, but we both have the best interests of Ontarians at heart and we're sickened to see what is happening under the reign of this government.

Not to mention one of the things that creates an environment where people can live within their means, creates an environment where businesses can thrive, creates an environment of prosperity in the province, and that is controlling one's debt. All householders know, all families know that if their debts increase, their standards of living will go down. The interest will eat away at the money that they can spend to improve their lifestyle. It is no different, it is not one bit different when you're talking about provincial debt. And what has this government done with our provincial debt?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Raised it up.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Raised it up.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Doubled it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They have raised it; they're on their way to doubling it. It took 23 premiers 136 years to accumulate Ontario's first \$148 billion of debt—\$148 billion of debt. That's what we had in 2003 when this government took office. Today, this government is on track to double that debt in two terms, in eight years. That is typical of a Liberal government.

Let's go back and look at the Peterson government. We won't talk about the debt of the Peterson government, but let's talk about the Ontario budget. Governments of Liberal persuasion love to spend money. Larry Grossman brought in the 1984 budget, and that budget was \$24 billion and change. Bob Nixon brought in the last Liberal government budget in 1990, and that budget was \$48 billion and change. From \$24 billion to \$48 billion; Peterson doubled the budget in this province in his term of office. This government is doubling the provincial debt in their term of office.

Liberals spend. Liberals can't help themselves; they spend. They spend more than they have. They spend up to the limit of the taxpayers' ability to pay. Finally, the taxpayers revolted in 1990 and elected Bob Rae, who today is a Liberal, but he was an NDPer then. What a place to go. That's how upset the people of Ontario were.

I sense that same upset, that same feeling of anger, anguish and frustration over not knowing how to control a government that's out of control. I sense that is there today. It will be interesting, a year from now, to see how Ontarians will react when they know that the largest tax increase in Ontario's history belongs to this government, the largest sales tax increase in Ontario's history belongs to this government, the largest deficit in Ontario's history belongs to this government, and the largest increase in our long-term debt in Ontario's history belongs to this government. That's not a trifecta; that's a quadfecta. That's four times—the worst four things in an economy that you can possibly do, and you win them all in Ontario's history. That's a sad day indeed for Ontario's families who have to finance this kind of thing that your government seems absolutely determined to carry out.

According to Stats Canada, the average university tuition in Ontario was \$5,388 in 2007. With an expected

5% annual increase, Ontario's university tuition will hit \$6,249 in 2010. This represents an \$861 increase over that two-year period—I'm sorry, \$861 per year. So, you're even taxing the university student. I've heard each of you say—if not in this House, you've said it privately—that the most important thing we can do is fund education. Your Premier even says that he wants to be known as the education Premier, but he's pricing it out of range of the average Ontarian family, which is already strapped with your increase in auto insurance, your increase in hydro costs, your increase in taxes, and your increase in long-term debt which is going to put a further tax on their children and on their children's children in the future. That's a shame.

The gasoline tax increase: putting tax on a tax on a tax. Not only do you tax gasoline 14 cents a litre, you also charge the provincial portion of HST, 8%, on that tax as well, increasing the price of gasoline in this province on July 1 by 8%, or approximately eight cents a litre—because it sells for around \$1 a litre—of that price of \$1.08 per litre, I think it is this morning. Without the HST, that price would be \$1. This morning, I filled up and I paid that extra money.

The electricity costs in this province: We've talked about those, and they're out of sight.

Property taxes continue to increase in this province. I know that's a municipal responsibility, but there's—guess what?—HST on property taxes now, which adds a further \$257 increase to property taxes.

Home heating costs are also subject to the 8%, the HST tax grab on home heating fuels. Families can expect to pay almost \$200 a year more in heating costs than they did last year.

All in all, this bill doesn't seem to deal a lot with smart government or good government. As you know, we cannot propose amendments to this bill during debate, but once Bill 110 gets to committee, I'll be considering an amendment that amends section 3 of the bill, its short title, to what it is really doing. We would amend it to call it the much ado about nothing act, or perhaps we could call it the Liberals have run out of gas act, or maybe Canada's worst government wasting Ontario families' time and money act.

1640

Of course, we shouldn't have to wait until this act gets to committee. I could just bring in a motion to amend section 3 right now to make the short name Canada's worst government has run out of gas act, if the House would give its unanimous consent for such a move.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): You're asking for unanimous consent?

Interjections: No.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: She has to ask the question first.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there unanimous consent? I hear a no.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Sorry, Madam Speaker; you caught me with a mouthful of ice. Thank you.

It's too bad that this government wouldn't call 'em like they see 'em. You can talk the talk, but this government fails miserably to walk the walk.

Madam Speaker, I would like to share my time at this time with the member for Durham, and I thank you very much for the House's attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Halton and I share many things. In fact, our ridings are often referred to as the bookends of the GTA, he being on the west side of the greater Toronto area and me being on the east side with the riding of Durham. We share many geographical features. More importantly, I think, our interest on this bill—he summarized it quite reasonably and respectfully, I think.

I do think that the trivializing of an important bill like this—I want to frame my remarks around a couple of themes. This is an omnibus bill. Some would say that it's a bill that attempts to provide some housekeeping and reorganization of a number of statutes. In fact, there are seven sections in the bill, and those seven sections cover seven different ministries. It's a very technical bill.

I would hope that it's going to hearings. When I look at the legislative agenda, this was introduced on October 5. Shortly after that, the House recessed for the week after Thanksgiving and members went to their ridings to consult with their constituents. In fact, I brought this up at a couple of meetings I was at, and a lot of people had not heard of it.

Now, when we came back to the House, we heard from the minister himself that the opposition—that's Tim Hudak—and also the other side of the House had not requested a briefing. Well, it's passing strange to me that they would not have offered us a briefing and scheduled it at a time when members would have returned, which would have been yesterday, and yet this debate started yesterday. The Attorney General and his parliamentary assistant spoke on it yesterday, and, as has been said today by the third party as well—the NDP member said it was the much ado about nothing bill, meaning you have to refer to the statutes it's amending, and in the statutes it's amending, it uses words—a lot of it is sort of downloading responsibilities from a registrar of a college or regulating agency to any public servant, basically. That's what it says in the bill.

I'm going to refer to a couple of specific parts of the bill, but I'm going to preface it, as I said in my remarks, with this: I am cautious and worried, perhaps even suspicious, of why this bill is being introduced and rushed. I can assume—a person of good will and nature here—that it will go to public hearings and there will be time—not like Bill 191, where they truncated the hearings, the public hearings were more or less squashed, or it won't be time-allocated until people are able to digest this bill.

The section that I have personal responsibility for as critic is the Ministry of Government Services in schedule 5. Now, schedule 5, really, on the surface, doesn't have much controversy in it that I can see, but again I want to preface my remarks by being cautious and potentially worried. What's the rush here? Why are they bundling up this omnibus bill? If they time-allocate it, that's an even

further signal, as they've done with another bill this morning, Bill 65—shut it off.

Schedule 5 covers the Business Corporations Act—not so bad. The act currently permits a director to delegate his or her powers under the act to any public servant in the ministry. The act is amended to allow the director to delegate these duties or powers to any public servant employed under part III of the Public Service of Ontario Act. Anybody who is free that day can deal with it. Now, that troubles me. Where's the accountability? They always talk about transparency and accountability.

Let's review this: Under the Business Corporations Act, they allow the director, who is an employee of the public sector—no criticism implied—to delegate to any public servant under part III of the act. It goes on to say, "The act is amended to transfer seven regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council"—these are cabinet orders—"to the minister. The act is also amended to provide the minister with regulation-making powers to prescribe documents that are required to accompany articles and applications under the act, and to prescribe requirements for the execution of certain documents filed with the director under the act. The regulation-making power of the minister to prescribe forms and provide for their use is transferred to the director."

So what they're doing is moving the deck chairs around here on the Titanic. That's what I see here. Who's responsible? We'll have to have an inquiry to find out who is responsible for changes to many of these organizations.

The Limited Partnerships Act is another part under schedule 5 of the act. It says here, "The act is amended to transfer two regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council"—these would be cabinet decisions—"to the minister, and to transfer the power to prescribe forms and provide for their use to the registrar."

It goes on. There are changes here to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. This morning we discussed this, Madam Speaker, you would know, at our caucus. Most of us felt the same way—cautious, concerned, suspicious when you see it affects the Community Care Access Corporations Act, which is one of the things that we have in our ridings. Community care access centres—underfunded. Long-term care is one of them—underfunded. The Health Protection and Promotion Act—underfunded. Independent health facilities—underfunded. Laboratory specimen collection centres—underfunded.

A lot of these agencies really come under the purview of the whole eHealth mandate—integrating electronically. They've wasted \$1 billion on that already, and now you can't possibly trace when they're downloading these decision-making authorities to basically—I'm looking at the Sergeant-at-Arms. He can actually execute some of these orders. That's what it says here: any public sector servant. This is a highly regarded person with an esteemed background, but I don't mean to single out any individual.

I would say that you lose control of that. You must be sure that you have the right person in the right position

with the right training to make the right decisions. They're delegating this to anybody who is sitting around the table, by the sounds of things, in some of these complex areas.

The Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act: There's just been a great review by members of all parties on the unanimous consent motion to have a select committee. They just filed a report on the disrepair that mental health in Ontario is in. The system has completely collapsed, and here they are making changes here.

The Physician Services Delivery Management Act is in the Ministry of Health, and our critic, Christine Elliott, remains concerned. That's all I got from her notes here: She remains concerned.

I heard the Attorney General speak in the Parliament yesterday. They were using their phraseology about attacking previous governments. Look forward. Lead by leading, not by criticizing the previous governments of the last 10 years. They're back to criticizing everybody as far back as John A. Macdonald, basically.

1650

There's an act coming up tomorrow on pension reform. It's the "blame Stephen Harper" act. You're in government for almost eight years, some would say seven years too long, but nonetheless you are in government, you're responsible, and you're making decisions. Ask yourself, how is it working? Ask the people of Ontario. What I heard last week is that there's a great lack of confidence, shall we say, to put it politely, in Premier McGuinty.

Now here they are with this bill. Going back to the bill itself, Bill 110, it's primarily delegating decision-making, so you can't find out who made the decision; like, nobody is responsible for the eHealth act. George Smitherman resigned but—he left for other reasons, I guess. I'm not sure why. I come back to two themes I'm driving here today. I remain cautious, concerned, arguably suspicious: a government that announced the eco tax and a week later fired the minister, Minister Gerretsen. They appointed a brand new minister, who was just the carriage on the HST. Now the minister is not responsible. Now they've cancelled the tax, or at least they say they did. But, you know, I don't trust this, this retracking all the time and changing the channel. I think the people of Ontario are suspicious, concerned, worried. We have the largest debt in the history of the province, the largest tax increases. We're on a spending binge, and you ask yourself, is it any better in our long-term-care homes? Is it any better for the children's aid societies? Is it any better for the people with MS? Is it any better for people with disabilities? Is it any better for anybody in this province with the highest levels of unemployment in the country?

I remain worried and seriously concerned. This bill weakens the decision-making process even further in a time when we need to consolidate. The mood of this House, the mood of our leader, Tim Hudak, is that we've got to work together here; we've got to lead forward with a plan.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: In fact, we've put plans on the table here. There doesn't seem to be a plan, not in energy—electricity prices going through the roof. As the previous speaker from Halton mentioned, name one thing that's not going up in price. Auto insurance, land transfer tax, medication, delisting services: I remain concerned and suspicious, and I can only say to you that the members on the other side, rightfully, are asking, "What's the plan?" I have to remind them that after eight years, you should know the plan. I remain worried now, after the comments I'm hearing from the government side of the House. I remain worried.

This bill is promoting, it says here, good government. I think it's promoting a weaker government, a fractured, restructured government, when they're allocating decision-making responsibilities to anyone under part III, as I said, of the act, and yet some of our critics here are just so anxious to speak on this bill that I have been more or less just fit in here this afternoon, because my part, section 5, my critic file, was quite small.

The government services thing—there's another thing they did. In the few seconds that I have left, government services, what they did—ServiceOntario is the new thing. They're going to make it more customer-friendly, and it will be closer to home. Do you know what they did? They've made it customer-friendly, all right. It's from 9 till 4:30, Monday to Friday, and for anybody who is actually working in this province—anybody who still has a job, that is, and isn't working in the public sector—why aren't they open on the weekend and evenings? What's wrong with that suggestion? That's customer service. But no—less government and more taxes.

I remain concerned, worried, suspicious. This bill is just one more example of: Can you trust Premier McGuinty? That's ultimately what this is about. You won't be able to find out who made the decision about the consultants or the fees or charges for certain things. I remain concerned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I have to agree with the members from Halton and Durham when they state their frustration with the lack of co-operation from the government committee members and their staff when you're in committee. If any bill is unpopular, they simply push it through by limiting debate, by calling for allocation motions, thereby limiting full debate in the House as well as public input. Good governments don't do things like that. Good governments don't retract legislation time and time again because they've screwed up. Eco fees are a perfect example.

I believe, in 2003, Mr. McGuinty promised not to raise taxes. Well, we're the highest-taxed people in Canada right now, and it's getting worse by the minute. The HST—a disaster. Hydro costs, heating bills—a disaster. The list goes on and on.

Good government: Good government listens to the people. Good government in committee allows the people to have their say. Good government listens to the

opposition and the third party if they have good amendments. I was in the seniors' bill committee and I believe we put in 91 amendments.. They only agreed to one housekeeping one, and there was a lot of good stuff in those amendments from the opposition and our party, the NDP. Did we get one? No.

Good governments listen. Good governments co-operate. As I'll reiterate, when I first got to this House, Mr. McGuinty stood up and said, "We're here to work for the people of Ontario. We're here to work together." Well, that wasn't true. It's partisan politics at its best. If it isn't theirs, they don't use it.

It really is sad. I feel for the people of Ontario. It's sad. This government is not co-operative. This government does its own thing. This government doesn't listen not only to us but to the people of Ontario. That's going to change next October.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a privilege, of course, to speak to the Good Government Act, 2010.

I think, just to introduce a little bit of clarity, hopefully, to the discussion here, first of all, the legislation eventually seeks to streamline and bring some consistency, and ultimately efficiency, to a whole range of issues. There's something on the order of about 70 different items, 70 different clauses, paragraphs affecting seven different ministries, with of course various issues, including the appointment of justices of the peace, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, the Ontario Energy Board Act, the Business Corporations Act, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act, and others. So there's a lot of different provisions. I understand that most of them really are of a technical nature, ultimately, as I said, to help to streamline and make more consistent and perhaps make more internally logical the various different acts as they affect and ramify each other.

I was also a little bit taken by some of the comments from our Conservative friends and foes opposite with reference to the education initiatives of the government of Ontario. I think the Premier does very legitimately aspire to be the education Premier, not only as the father of graduates and the son of a professor and the husband of a teacher, but on the ground, the lived reality, the lived experience. We have higher and increasing graduation rates. We have 200,000 more post-secondary spots in the province of Ontario. Surely, that's not only province- and economy- but life-altering in terms of how this province goes forward in terms of its prosperity.

Of course, I was very proud to accompany the Minister of Education, very recently, when we opened another \$12-million facility within my own riding that's going to help with full-day kindergarten and other initiatives.

So when the Premier does speak about aspiring to be the education Premier, I think you really should give credit where credit is due, because that's our lived experience in Etobicoke North.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I wanted to thank the members from Halton and from Durham for their very thoughtful comments on this Good Government Act.

I really have to say that this Bill 110, An Act to promote good government—here we have a government that has been identified in the daily newspapers of this country as Canada's worst government. "Canada's worst government" is the label they wear, and now they're coming up with a Good Government Act. Isn't the hypocrisy of this Liberal government so evident? I really think that if this government was interested in good government, they would look and understand that 76% of the people in this province don't want them anymore; that 76% of the people in this province say it is time for change.

1700

A truly good government bill would be a bill that announces the Liberals' resignation from this House. That would truly be a good government bill: that they recognize the people have lost confidence in this Liberal government to actually govern with any honesty, any efficacy, any openness, any transparency. This government has been mired in scandals and debts, and everybody in this province realizes it's a time for change. A good government would recognize the people's will and step down.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to pick up where my fellow speaker left off in terms of good government, and just to reiterate, for those who are watching, this bill is essentially a housekeeping bill that we're debating. It essentially just tweaks other bills. We're going to spend, quite frankly, hours and hours and hours debating this bill, which is interesting. Meanwhile, while the G20 was going on—this is a government that is now trying to pass a good government bill, that secretly dusted off an old regulation and essentially turned our city into a police state while the House was still sitting, and there was no debate about that at all.

I would say that not since the horror of the War Measures Act—which, I want to put on the record, was only opposed by members of the New Democratic Party—has any government acted with such deliberate callousness and nefariousness as this government, the McGuinty government, during the G20, and yet there was no debate in this House. But we can spend hours debating a housekeeping bill.

I ask you, is that good government? Certainly, thousands of people who have sent me emails say, "Absolutely not." Thousands of people in all areas of the political spectrum said that this is not democratic, transparent government—a government that would act in such a cloak-and-dagger way that even their own backbenchers were upset by the actions of the cabinet.

This is not good government, and yet we have a housekeeping bill that will take hours and hours of this Legislature's time. That's the way this government works.

Why do they call it "Good Government"? There's only one reason: so that they can use it in the upcoming election to say that the opposition voted against good government. Come on.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Halton and I are thankful to those who were here and listening to the input that we provided on Bill 110. More importantly, I think that we both agree to summarize this bill—it's an omnibus bill dealing with seven different ministries. It's very technical—delegation of authority in many of the regulatory bodies in the province of Ontario, including health authorities. It's worrisome in this time when we find all of the hospitals suffering; we find all of the clinics suffering; we find doctors are concerned.

What we're saying here is, take it easy. We expect and trust that you will have consultations on this legislation. I know that our members on this side want to maintain the debate on this bill. I wait for the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, as well as the member from Thornhill. These are just two of the members who expressed grave concern and wish to put their remarks on behalf of their constituents on the record.

Those on the other side, the government side—I hope they don't skip their rotation. That will be one more signal, one more sign that emphasizes the concerns I've expressed. What are they not saying?

A very technical bill needs to have more openness, more accountability, and more transparency when you're making these kinds of changes that affect the lives of the people of Ontario, especially seniors.

So I remain concerned and cautious. We want to modernize government; who wouldn't? But when you have a government that's in reverse mode, not just on the eco tax, but the whole electricity market is completely messed up—let's put it that way—I remain concerned that they've lost their way. This government has got a bill here, and somehow it makes me worried.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Good government: When I read that title, I wondered what province I was in. It certainly wasn't Ontario. Then I read the bill, and a light came on: another McGuinty ominous bill. The back—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, ominous. Ominous.

Mr. John O'Toole: Ominous bill; it is ominous.

Mr. Paul Miller: You got that, did you? Ominous—the back door to implementing distasteful legislation. Some of the legislation might be good, and I might be able to support it, but the omnibus bill tells me that there will be more articles that are offensive to my constituents than are helpful to anyone. It will almost guarantee that I cannot support the bill, and what does that do? What it does is it allows the finance minister or someone like him to get up and say, "That member and his party voted against this. Blah, blah, blah." They do it every time. But what they don't tell you is that the bill is not broken

down paragraph by paragraph or issue by issue. You either eat it or you vote for it. That's the choice, and then they always stand up in the House and say, "Your party voted against this." Well, the public should know that you have to vote for the whole bill. Whether there's 50 things wrong with it and two things right, sometimes you have to vote for the two things that are right even though there's 48 things wrong with it, because they'll say, "You voted against it." Pretty sad, isn't it? It provides the governing group with their stock question period answers: "You voted against it."

Like so much that comes from that side of the House—there's a cloud, a smokescreen—if the government really wanted to implement good government legislation, they could start with question period. I know it's not called answer period, but it also is not called weave, bob, divert, demean, degrade, and make personal attacks period. But that's what we get. Then, to top it off, we get mindless standing ovations and clapping—that's a bonus. Let's take a step back, think about what the people of Ontario deserve from their politicians and how we can provide that. Let's look at the procedures and how we can ensure that when we ask a question for a constituency, we actually get an answer. Even if the answer is, "We don't know," that can be followed up with a commitment to get the answer to the member within a set time frame so that he can tell his constituents what's going on. And we also ensure that we actually get the answer within that time frame, not asking for extensions or simply ignoring the question, which seems to be the norm around here. But perhaps my dream of a robust, cut-and-thrust, honest exchange in question period—perhaps I'm dreaming in Technicolor.

I've had several guests visit this Legislature for question period, and without fail I've heard comments like: "If this was high school, they'd all be in the principal's office," "That's appalling," and "That question was reasonable." When I came here, I hoped not to get involved in that, but I got dragged into it, and now I find myself doing the same thing they do—which is wrong, but we all do it.

If the government record is so bad that we're asking many questions on an issue, this group across the floor will respond to anything but suggesting ways to fix the problem—they don't. They just go on the attack. They don't talk about fixing it. But, again, I'm dreaming, I guess.

Another way of implementing good government would be the contents of the bills—that's very important. As I'll reiterate, on the seniors' bill, the NDP put in 91 amendments—91—from the nursing association, from user groups, from seniors' groups, from CARP. We put in all kinds of recommendations from all these organizations. We didn't think this stuff up. We represented the people and put it in. They didn't take one. All five Liberal members shot it down, and the only thing they changed was one little housekeeping thing that they had screwed up. So 90 amendments fell on deaf ears; 90 amendments weren't implemented. They went on again

with their time allocation and their "Push it through and who cares what happens after?"

1710

Each part of the omnibus bill can easily be separated out into individual bills, each of which should be able to stand on its own merit, but that doesn't happen. We don't deal with them on an individual basis. The first advantage of this is that the real issues can be honed in on for debate, public consultation and amendments specific to the unique set of issues of the day. It will also allow the opposition members to vote for the part of the bill that reflects the wishes of their constituents. But when you do it the way they do it and the way it's done around here, the constituents can't get it because they've turned down the amendments.

Of course, that would defeat the real purpose of the omnibus bill and expose the government to tighter security specific to each minister or issue. On that, I suggest that every bill be subject to at least two days of public consultation and that one day be away from Toronto, or that we implement an easy mechanism for written comments to be heard by the committee. Ontarians in the near and far corners of our province deserve the same opportunity to speak to their elected representatives as those in and near Toronto. If we could make these kinds of rules part of the standing orders, it would prevent the government, with its majority, from keeping the public away by not allowing public consultations. That would be a good start to good government.

I understand that this is the omnibus bill. Many amendments are largely eliminating references to acts or entire acts that are either outdated or were never proclaimed. If that was the sole purpose of the omnibus bill, perhaps it might have a role in good government. This bill purports to be the second Open for Business bill. If this is the principle for Open for Business initiatives of this government, initiatives to get Ontarians back to work, this is incredibly minor. If this is all the government has to offer for Ontarians out of work and out of luck, it's a pretty sad case. The NDP believes in a good job for everyone because a good job is the best way to ensure working women and men a share of Ontario's prosperity.

Ontario lost 350,000 jobs in the last recession. We've gained maybe 140,000 of those back, and most of them are in the service industry. Ontario lost 27,000 jobs last month. There is a job crisis in Ontario, and this bill does nothing to solve that problem.

Ontario's manufacturing and resource regions remain devastated. I shouldn't have to tell the members opposite how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to this province. I don't have to tell this House how important jobs are for the community I represent in Hamilton. Siemens is leaving; Stelco is in crisis; Procter and Gamble left; CIL Paints left; Otis Elevator; Inglis; Canada Works. The list goes on and on and on: 52,000 manufacturing jobs in the last 25 years out of Hamilton, not coming back. These jobs are just as important as any other jobs in the province. In fact, they were good-paying

jobs; they were middle-class-paying jobs. You could put your kids through school. You could buy a house. You could buy a fridge, you could buy a stove, you could buy a car. But not on \$10 an hour, and that's what they're creating—a society of \$11-an-hour jobs.

Then, 20 years down the road they're going to say, "What did we do? We got all these profits for these big multinational companies. They got their money. They came in and closed our plants. They went back to their countries. They did what they had to do. But who's going to buy the product now? Because nobody in Canada makes a decent wage." I guess that's counterproductive, the way I look at it. They're not going to have the money to buy the fridge, the stove, the car, the mortgage, because they'll be making minimum wage or a little better.

In the last 15 years in Hamilton they've gone to multi-tasking in the plants that are left. Multi-tasking means that they bring employees in for two years. They don't get benefits, they don't get the wage of the guy who has been there for 20 years—they get half, if they're lucky; doing the same work and getting half, with no benefits. Do you think that person is going to go out and buy that new Cadillac after all the money you've sunk into the car industry? No, because they can't afford it.

We're headed to a disaster in this province, and the sooner we wake up, the better. We're losing good-paying jobs left, right and centre. Our hospital costs are rocketing. Our welfare is up. Our social services are up. Why is that? Because all the jobs are leaving Ontario and Canada and going elsewhere so they can get cheap labour, produce the same products, and sell them back to us, the same stuff we used to make here.

Do you know, Madam Speaker, that we don't own one major steel mill in this country? They're all under foreign control. What does a foreign-controlled place do? It shuts down the competition. How do you shut down the competition? You buy it. US Steel bought Stelco. ArcelorMittal bought Dofasco. Sault Ste. Marie's was bought by a group from India. And they're so far, so good. But if things get tough, what are they going to do? They are going to go back to their countries of origin, keep their people employed, working at cheaper rates, cheaper labour, and close ours. Then we'll be buying the same steel that we used to produce from them.

I go down to the docks in Hamilton and I see steel from Brazil, steel from Romania. I see steel from everywhere else in the world but Hamilton, and we've got the two biggest steel mills in the country there. One of them is on idle, and soon they're going to lock out the employees there too, like they did at Lake Erie. That's what US Steel is doing. They came in here and made promises to the Canadian government that they would protect jobs and maintain a certain workforce, maintain production levels. They didn't do it, and what did the good government do? They let them get away with it. "We're going to fine you." Oh, great. They're going to fine you. While I've got thousands of people out of work, they're going to fine them, and no chance—it doesn't

look good at all that that plant is going to keep going, unless they get total concessions from the workers, move them back 35 or 40 years to a wage that they can't even exist on. That's what business wants: big profits, no benefits, no money. It's a sad story.

These jobs are not just important because manufacturing jobs pay an average of \$2.50 per hour more than the average hourly wage in this province. These jobs are not just important because in addition to paying better, these jobs also come with pensions and good benefits. This Ontario government and the Canadian government have turned their back on pensioners. Oh, they're fixing all the administration of pensions and they are saying who can run it and who can't and all that, but they're not sinking any more money into the PBGF. They're not sinking money into pensions. They are closing plants, telling people, "You're out of luck." You work somewhere for 35 years, and you're out of luck—out of luck. The guarantee fund—one major company goes down in Ontario and that fund that the government has is wiped out, wiped out by one corporation, gone. And they're going to guarantee a thousand a month for the rest of our lives? I don't think so. I think it would be dead in three years, finished, no money left, and those people would lose two thirds of their pension, two thirds that they worked 40 years for. It's disgraceful.

Mr. McGuinty likes to pretend that the current jobs crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resources represent the foundation of Ontario; they service our economy. If you have any problems in the manufacturing and resource sector, you should eventually have problems in retail, financial services and other areas. It's a rippling effect. No middle-class jobs, no money—everything pays. Secondary industries go out the window, financial services go out the window, and retailers and small business go out the window. I'm sure some of the people who have come from small towns know what it's like to have a strike in town. You have brothers fighting brothers, cousins not talking to cousins, scab workers going into plants. It ruins communities for years. That's good government? If this government would pass anti-scab legislation like they have in Quebec, half the problems would be solved, but they won't do it.

In fact, I believe that there are fundamental changes in the economy taking place that require innovative, activist governments—not sitting on their hands, but activist governments. Due to the global financial crisis and the failed federal and provincial policies, Ontario's economic foundation is threatening to crumble before our eyes, and I believe that the government must respond quickly.

1720

The NDP believes that government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs and, when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to their employer are treated fairly and given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs, not for \$11 an hour when you

were making \$30 an hour as a welder. You want \$30 an hour.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in an activist government. They're reactive, not activist. Mr. McGuinty has stood on the sidelines, showing absolutely no leadership, while factories and mills are downsizing and closing, costing hundreds of thousands of workers their jobs, including attacks on their pensions and benefits. He's stood by and watched this all unfold, saying, "It's a global market. I can't do anything about it. It's global. I can't do anything about it." Absolute nonsense. How about a little Canadian protectionism, like they do in the States? What do you think Obama's doing? What is Obama doing? Protectionism. That's why all our jobs are going to the States and our steel is being shipped there and being produced down there.

I repeat: Ontario's economy is bouncing along the bottom of the barrel on Dalton McGuinty's watch because, quite frankly, Liberals think that the market must always be the final arbiter of which jobs survive and how jobs disappear—not true.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I'm here to tell you—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: You want to hear? I'm here to tell you that the NDP doesn't see things that way. We believe that sometimes the market works and sometimes it doesn't, and when it doesn't—and this is one of the times that it doesn't, in Ontario's economic history—when the market definitely isn't working, the government must step in, on behalf of hard-working men and women, and set things right. Don't keep riding the disaster train.

Here are just some of the policies that we have brought forward in the last two years. Here are some of the policies we've brought forward:

- a buy-Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

- tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing, in addition to longer advance notice and enhanced mandated severance;

- expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advance notice in mass layoff situations;

- pension and wage protection that would make sure workers get every penny they're owed from their employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy;

- the elimination of the HST on hydro, which would allow \$500 million to be put back into the economy and put people back to work.

These are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in the last two years, with the Ontario jobs crisis. And when it came to committee, when it came to this House—nothing. Dead. Silence. "We don't want to listen to it. We know better." How did you make out? It's not looking too good, is it? And every last one of them has been rejected by this government—every last suggestion.

I'm not saying that these ideas are the whole story, and I want to make it clear that we in the NDP will continue to look at new and creative ideas to deal with the unprecedented economic crisis in our province.

I could go on and on and on. It's just not right; it's not fair. I can guarantee you that the NDP caucus at Queen's Park will be doing everything we can to make sure that working men and women of this province are fairly rewarded for their hard work, and to put as much pressure on those folks across there as we have to to ensure that the provincial government will lend a helping hand, defend pensioners, defend the working people of this province and stop kowtowing to major industries, foreign-owned industries, and start doing a little bit of Canadianism, a little bit of protection for the people of Ontario—our province.

We are a productive society, we are a skilled society and we're also a proud society. But over the last seven years, we've been going on a downhill slide and we are at the bottom of the barrel.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I've listened to the member opposite's comments. What he forgets about this good government bill is that government has two responsibilities when it's managing its legislation. One, the legislation should be easy to understand and easy to work with, so that people can effectively use the legislation for what it's intended. That's why there are a number of technical amendments that relate to making the legislation clearer and easier to work with.

The other big responsibility of a government is to maintain a strong and healthy economy. What is a strong and healthy economy? A strong and healthy economy is a jurisdiction where businesses want to locate, and here in Ontario we want businesses to locate and to grow. One way to attract those businesses to this jurisdiction is to create the context in which they can operate effectively and efficiently.

There is a lot of stuff in legislation that creates excessive paperwork, undue administrative burdens and all of those sorts of things. To the extent that we can rationalize that and clarify that, it makes this jurisdiction friendly to business. It makes this jurisdiction a place where business wants to relocate. If businesses come here, that means they hire people; there are jobs. If there are businesses and if there are jobs, there are businesses paying taxes, there are workers paying taxes, and those tax dollars come into the province. What do we use them for? Hospitals, schools, universities, child care—the whole host of things that makes Ontario the place that everybody really wants to live.

But we have to be vigilant, and we have to keep our legislation modern and current. That's what this is about.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the address by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I appreciate his passion on the subject.

I've been here about seven and a half months, and it seems that this government has a real fetish for omnibus pieces of legislation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Ominous.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, ominous omnibus pieces of legislation. It's funny, because, when you look at this act, Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts, it's just an excuse for this government to use the words "good government" in a sentence. If I went out and took some of these documents to the average constituent in our riding and said, "By amending all of these acts"—and there's a whole whack of them here—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Seventy.

Mr. Steve Clark: —70 acts—"this is what this government deems is an act of good government," they'd laugh me right out of the room.

Let's not forget that we've been in our constituencies for the last week. I know what I've been doing. I've been talking to many, many, many constituents. I've had a number of hydro bills dropped off to my office asking me whether that is good government, the increases they're facing. We've got a number of pieces of legislation—I was speaking at our local chamber of commerce and I had a number of petitions. My seatmate, the member for Sarnia-Lambton, has a bill that is waiting to go to committee, Bill 78, which deals with food banks and a tax credit for farmers. If that was part of this bill, I would see some of my constituents who'd think that's good government. Just by putting the words "good government" in the bill—that's a farce, because we all know that this is a housekeeping bill. It's ridiculous for this government—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to get up after the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. He speaks not only with conviction and passion; he speaks from experience working as a steelworker. He knows, better than most, probably, in this Legislature, what it is to make a decent manufacturing salary, a salary that will actually support a family, unlike what has happened in the last seven years in this province, which is that the middle class is emptying out, the poor are increasing and the wealthy are increasing. We are losing our middle class. That should be a cause for concern for this government, but clearly it's not.

I want to go back, though, to the point that I made in my last so-called two-minute hit, which was that this so-called good government bill that we're going to be spending hours debating in this House is really just a housekeeping bill that changes some minutiae of other bills, is given due process, but when this government in cabinet, in secret, dusted off an old regulation to turn Toronto into a police state, nobody even knew about it in this Legislature. We didn't know about it in this Legislature. Even some backbench Liberals didn't know what was going on. The police in my area didn't know what was going on. Come on. Short of the War Measures

Act, this was an egregious moment in history, about which I still receive emails. Thousands of people were arrested on trumped-up charges, with almost all of them released. Come on—not a chance to debate in it this House.

1730

This government should be ashamed, absolutely horrified and ashamed. In fact, people of good conscience should be getting up from their seats on the other side of the aisle and walking across to this side of the aisle on the basis of that action alone—if there were ethicality and morality on that side of the House.

That's good government. Good government is standing for principles and morality, not standing for the kind of charade that was the G20 in Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: I was asked to speak on the Good Government Act. I can shift over to speaking to the G20 and fake lakes, but I think I might be found out of order. I'm not sure how the segue was made from there to this act by the member of the opposition, but it was interesting rhetoric to listen to.

Coming back to what we have been asked to debate upon, which is the Good Government Act, it is to build on the Open for Business Act. It is to modernize both language and intent. It is to see a number of acts through the implementation of 70 amendments, reduce the difficult language, bring clarity to the objectives of that legislation, and make them more user-friendly. I frequently find, at home in Barrie and in other places, that constituents find it very difficult to tackle legislation filled with, dare I say—married, as I am, into the legal world—legalese. By bringing clarity, by bringing this step two to the Open for Business Act via the Good Government Act, the government is going to accomplish just that.

Sometimes we need to pass legislation that some might deem not sexy, but nevertheless—it is technical in nature, but the outcomes are excellent and will be much appreciated by those who need to deal with that legislation. I think it's very easy and very comfortable to speak on behalf of that legislation. It's good work for us to do, and we're engaged in that.

I look forward to getting a little more positive response from the other side, although the interest in diverting is forever apparent in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess I can make this short. The frustration is obvious on this side of the House from the official opposition, from the third party. It continues week in and week out. The frustration I see when I sit on the committees and the lack of interest by the government members, who half the time don't even read the submissions we put in—they don't even look at them. They don't deal with good amendments that come from our sources, who are good, hard-working people: the

nurses' association, steelworkers, manufacturing workers, seniors. We deal with CARP; we deal with them all. We talk to them all, and this is what they'd like to see. So they're just as frustrated. It might be the reason the polls are showing that 80% want a change of government, because they're not listening. They don't listen to us, they don't listen to our recommendations and they don't use any of our recommendations. This has been going on since I've been here.

When Mr. McGuinty stood up that first day and said, "We're here to work for the people of Ontario. We're here to work as a team"—a load of nonsense. That's not how this House works. They don't take good ideas from other people, and if they do get good ideas from other people, they wait for six months and pretend it's their idea and then bring it out. That's what they do, and that's unfortunate.

If the people really knew what went on in this House, they'd be lifting their eyebrows, for sure. It's amazing what's gone on since I've been here. I can't believe it's so dysfunctional. We could do a lot better, and I certainly hope the next government—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: I certainly know that the next government in this province has got to do a better job or we're all in trouble.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes this afternoon on the Good Government Act, 2010.

Before I begin those remarks, though, I want to just make a comment, if I can, on some of the remarks that were made by other members this afternoon. I've had opportunity to be around here this afternoon for most of the remarks that were made on this particular piece of legislation.

The member from Durham, when he speaks—and hopefully we'll see him back here again before the end of the day—has a wonderful capacity for making you smile no matter what it is that he says, even if what he is saying—how shall I phrase this?—deviates, perhaps, from what might be factual in terms of whatever it is we may be debating. In his remarks earlier, when he was speaking on the good government bill, he was talking about how it would have been easier for him or other members of his particular caucus to make comments on this particular piece of legislation had they been able to have been briefed or had they had time to have been better prepared.

It's my understanding that every effort possible was made to accommodate members of all parties, both opposition parties, when it came to briefings on this matter, and in fact I would remind the member from Durham, who apparently had challenges in that regard, that the members of the third party, apparently, had no such challenges. They were able to meet and be fully briefed on the matter before us here today. So I just wanted to say to my friend the member from Durham, who does tend to make me smile no matter what it is he

is saying, that apparently it was him and his party who were the ones experiencing those challenges, and that the third party did not have a similar experience.

The member from Halton earlier today as well spoke at length; he did, I think, about 45 minutes or so of an hour leadoff, and I congratulate him for that. That's not always the easiest thing in the world to do. Before he shared his last bit of time with the member from Durham, he spent a fair bit of his time, when he was speaking on the Good Government Act, speaking on the state of the economy in Ontario and the state of the economy in a more broad context. If I can, I want to focus some of my remarks today in the same vein, at least at the beginning.

When I came to this place in 2003, in that particular provincial election, I came here with two terms of experience on municipal council in Thunder Bay. I had six years of experience, and I think in 2003 there were 38 or more first-time members who came into the Legislature, and I recall that a significant number of that 38, if I've got that number right, came with municipal experience—previous, very directly, before the provincial election, municipal experience.

The reason that many of that number were here as former municipal councillors and so many of them had put their names forward for election in 2003 was that while they were on municipal councils in the province of Ontario, they were listening and watching very closely what had gone on with the government of the day: the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government. As a municipal councillor for six years in Thunder Bay, I had very direct, first-hand experience as to what effect the provincial government could have on the ability of myself and my group, as a municipal council, to manage the affairs of our particular communities.

So, going into 2003, many of us put our names forward. We wanted to have an ability to impact what it was the provincial government was doing and how those actions could impact, potentially negatively or positively, the goings-on within our particular communities. The member from Halton spoke at length about that and the state of the economy. I want to put a bit of context around that.

My experience started in 1997 to 2003. We remember that in 1995, going forward for eight years under that particular rule of the Conservative government of the day, we witnessed in the United States at that time a very, very strong, robust economy. Given the fact that Ontario represents about 40% of the total GDP of Canada and given the fact that 40% of Ontario's GDP is export driven, the fact that we had a very strong and robust economy in the United States—our major and by far our biggest trading partner—the fact that we had a strong American economy obviously put the government of the day in a very good position for the Ontario economy to be doing just as well, as we piggybacked on what was going on with the United States.

1740

We also had at that time, which further supported the capacity of the government of the day to have a strong

economy, a 63- or 70-cent dollar; I don't remember exactly where it was. During the eight years, it bounced around a little bit.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Sixty-four cents.

Mr. Bill Mauro: But we certainly know it was significantly lower than it is today or when we came to government, through our seven years and counting of government. We certainly know that we're around par today. It has bounced around a little bit over the last year or so. We know that during those times, it was significantly lower; as low as 64 cents, my friend from Peterborough tells me.

Obviously, currency trading at 35% or 40% lower than the value of your biggest trading partner provides you once again with a significant aid to your economy, especially when you're export-driven.

We also know that back then the price of a barrel of oil was somewhere in the order of magnitude of \$20 or \$25 a barrel. I was asking around before I got up to speak today. Somebody told me that today it was somewhere in the order of \$78 a barrel, and we know it has been higher than that since we've been in government, since 2003.

So here's my point: In spite of all of those things playing very well in favour of the government of the day from 1995 to 2003—and remember, this is a party that loves to tell you that they can take care of your pocketbook, that they are the ones who can best manage the fiscal matters in the province of Ontario. In spite of having all of those factors playing in their favour from 1995 to 2003, the result was what? When we came to government—not a government number but a number given to us and the people in the province of Ontario by the Auditor General. In spite of all that I've just said over the last seven or eight minutes, we, as a new government in 2003, were left with a \$5.3-billion deficit during some of the best economic times that you were ever able to find in the province of Ontario.

With all of those things working for them as well as they possibly could have—I mean, how much more can you have working in your favour than a 63-cent Canadian dollar, a robust American economy and a \$20 price per barrel of oil? Still, under those circumstances, we found ourselves with a \$5.3-billion deficit when we came to government. Now, that's not my number, and that's not a government number; it's a number from the Auditor General. Yet over there they want to talk about the state of the economy.

He talked about the debt in the province of Ontario today. Yeah, we've got a debt. The Conservative government federally in Canada has the biggest debt in the history of the country, right? The biggest debt. Why is that relevant? It's relevant because if we ever had a government that was ideologically predisposed against running deficits or helping industry or raising taxes, it would be this particular federal government. Yet, during the economic times that we find ourselves in, they have run up something in the neighbourhood of a \$50-billion or \$60-billion deficit.

The point is simply that, yeah, we've got a big deficit here in year in the province of Ontario. But given the

state of the economy here in the province and in the country and in the world, described by many as being the greatest recession since the Great Depression, we made some decisions, and some of those decisions were to invest heavily in infrastructure. We did that. I can rhyme off example after example in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan where those decisions to continue to make major infrastructure investments have led to incredibly significant job creation.

The members opposite may have had a different approach. They may have chosen not to make any of those investments. They may have chosen to apparently try to keep the deficit number a little bit lower. But they need to then list for you, the people who are listening to this, what it is they would not have funded.

That \$5.3-billion deficit that we inherited in 2003 had other things that it's really quite hard to imagine could have been occurring, and yet we could come to government and still find that. Let me talk to you about a few of those things.

As I said, when we were in municipal council—how many people here came to this place in 2003 with municipal council experience primarily because they went through the downloading exercise brought forward by the government of the day, the Harris-Eves government?

They want to talk to you about not raising taxes; they want to talk to you about taking care of your pocketbook. But they conducted the biggest tax shift in the history of the province of Ontario, and they did it by downloading services onto the residential property tax base at the municipal level. They hid it. They want to tell you they didn't raise taxes. They shifted the taxes down to the residential property taxpayer, just like they did when it came to energy pricing, and I'll get to that in a little while. But they hid it. They played games with it. I was there on municipal council.

But they want to tell you, and they tried to tell you for a long time, that that downloading tax shift that occurred in the province was revenue-neutral. Well, we all know that was a bunch of nonsense. I know all kinds of roadways—little communities in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, like Oliver Paipoonge, which have minimal tax bases and roadworks that are very, very large, because their geography is large, but whose tax base is small, and which are still trying to find the capacity to pay for the roads that were downloaded onto their smaller municipalities. They'll tell you it was revenue-neutral. Those communities are going to struggle forever with finding the capacity from their property tax base to pay for that infrastructure. We'll see; we've been helping with that in a significant way. But they'll try and tell you that it was revenue-neutral.

Well, then, let's ask them why, if it was revenue-neutral, did they set up a fund called the special transition fund? I can remember as a municipal councillor the work that we did to get our share of money out of that, and in the first year after we fought to get that fund, the city of Thunder Bay received \$7 million out of the special

transition fund—so much for revenue-neutrality. They found it necessary to backpedal a little. The next year, we got \$3 million, and then that was it. The fund was gone. So that much money on an annual basis for about 10 or 12 years has been left to the residential property taxpayers in Thunder Bay and every other municipality around this province to try and find off of their property tax base. That's what they did when it came to taxes, and I tie that back to the \$5.3-billion deficit that they left us after they had shifted away that much cost that used to be under provincial purview. That's what they did.

But it wasn't the only thing that they did. To try and hide that deficit—and the member over there started this one when he went down the road of businesses and debts and taxation—one of the other things that they did when they went down that road while they were still in government was sell provincial government assets. They knew that there was an election coming up, and so they tried to hide the debt and make it seem a lot less than it really was. Remember, this is in the context of one of the best economies in years in the United States, where the economy of Ontario is benefiting from that, and still all of this is going on. So the highway was—I'm not from the Toronto area; what was the number of the highway that was sold?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The 407.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Highway 407. Now, I've heard the estimated value of Highway 407 put as high as—

Interjection: Eleven billion.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Eleven billion? I've heard the estimated value put as high as \$11 billion. Potentially, that's what that highway cost or would have cost to replace. Yet the government of the day in—I'm not sure what year that was sold.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was 1999.

Mr. Bill Mauro: In 1999, they sold it for \$3 billion. They sold for \$3 billion an asset that was deemed to be worth or the replacement value of which might have been as high as \$11 billion. It's pretty staggering to think why anybody would do it.

Well, the reason that they did it was because they were stuck. Even though we've got a red-hot economy in the United States, even though the economy in Ontario is percolating right along, following on the heels of that red-hot economy in the US, they still found the need to sell for \$3 billion an \$11-billion asset. They still found the need to download provincial services so that they could deal with issues like trying to pay for their tax cuts, and then it still went on. It still went on.

What else did they do? They emaciated ministry after ministry.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Natural resources.

Mr. Bill Mauro: MNR? I'm not sure how many MNR offices they closed. Somebody told me as many as 30% to 50% of them were closed. I'm reluctant to put that number out there, but I know it was—how many was it?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Two thousand staff.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Some 2,000 staff at MNR gone. I forget how many offices were closed, but it was a very

significant number. I tell my friend that it was a very significant number.

But I don't want to spend too much time on the MNR offices. What I want to spend a bit more time on is the Ministry of the Environment offices. What happened when they were trying to hide their deficit, when they were trying to pay for their tax cuts after they sold the 407, after they downloaded all of those services from the province onto the residential tax base? What happened when they gutted the MOE offices—another way to try and save a few bucks to pay for your tax cuts and to hide your debt and your deficit. What else happened when the MOE got cut? Directly linked, by Justice O'Connor, to the Walkerton crisis—not by the government, but by Justice O'Connor, another result of trying to hide your debt.

You say you're good at managing an economy? This is all tied back to that. It's all tied back to it; it's all part and parcel. Justice O'Connor made a direct link to the decision by that former government to emaciate MNR offices, but more specifically on this topic, MOE offices. People died. Six or seven people passed away as a result of that direct link, made by Justice O'Connor, when it came to the emaciating of MOE offices in the province of Ontario.

1750

Mr. Steve Clark: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: What's this got to do with Bill 110?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member to frame his remarks in the context of Bill 110.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate the caution, and I appreciate the point of order by the member opposite. I would have expected that the Speaker might have had a similar caution to the member from Halton, who went on for quite some time when it came to discussing the economy in the province of Ontario. That's what this is all about. The decisions made by the government of the day were to download services onto the residential property tax base, sell government assets, cut back services like crazy, and try and hide a debt from us—

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Madam Speaker, the member knows the rules of this House and is ignoring you and the rules, and that's not right. He's been chastised once, and we'll continue to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's not a point of order, but I would remind the member to frame his remarks within the context of Bill 110.

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: Madam Speaker, we're talking about a bill here in the House, a good government bill. I sat and listened to the honourable member from Parkdale-High Park rant on about a War Measures Act. How is that—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think perhaps we've touched a nerve.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I sat here most of the afternoon and I listened very patiently to the remarks of the members of the official opposition and of the third party. The member from Halton spent a great deal of his 45 minutes or so talking about the business environment that exists in the province of Ontario today, and I'm simply doing the same thing. I'm comparing our record to theirs. Now, that member may not want to hear it.

That's ultimately what it's about, isn't it? We're Liberals on this side of the House, we've got Conservatives over there, and we've got the NDP over here. Within the last 20 years in the province of Ontario, all three parties have had the privilege of governing, and as we go forward into next year, that's what we're going to be able to do. We're going to be able to compare records. I'm very much looking forward to that. The member from Halton spent a fair bit of his time today doing that. That's what I'm doing now. I'm not doing anything differently from what he did for 45 minutes of his one hour. It's exactly what we're doing.

We're very, very pleased to have the opportunity to talk today, and I do appreciate the comments from my friends opposite. It seems like they don't want to be reminded about what happened when they were here. We need to put in context what has gone on while we've been in government, and I think one of the best ways we can do that is by comparing records. Yes, we've got a record from 2003 going forward to 2011; they had a record from 1995 to 2003; and they had a record from 1990 to 1995. That's going to be the focus and that's the way it should be. That's what people want. They don't want to hear these folks over here. I mean, that's fine. I respect the role of the opposition. They're going to get up and criticize us, and that's fair. I don't expect them to come over here and give us a pat on the back. But by the same token, they need to understand that from time to time the members of the government are going to do the same thing. We're going to get up and remind the people of the province of Ontario, as we go forward to October 2011, that they had a record. We're going to remind them of that record, just as they see it's their role to remind the people about our record. I'm comfortable with that. Let's bring it on, let's let it happen, because that's where we're going. You've got a record of eight years, they had a record of five, we're going to have a record of eight, and so let's play. That's what it's going to be all about. That is where we're going.

The Good Government Act of 2010 is exactly—I'll go back to the point I made earlier, as I have to close. I see my time is running down. The member from Durham, who ultimately did not make it back to the chamber—it's unfortunate that he didn't make it back here today; it would have been good to see him. He made reference to the fact that the members of the official opposition did not have an opportunity to get briefed on this particular topic. I just want to remind the people of the province of Ontario who are interested in this topic that, in fact, the members of the third party had no challenge with that

particular issue. They were able to avail themselves of briefings at length so that they could be prepared for their remarks today. Unfortunately, for some reason, the members of the official opposition found that they were unable to do that.

Speaker, I want to thank you for the time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Really, when you look at this Good Government Act and when you hear that title—I know that the people of Ontario, when they hear the words “Good Government Act,” would be expecting a lowering of the cost of living. They would be expecting a lowering of the cost of doing business. They would be expecting a reduction in taxes. Will this Good Government Act reduce the cost of living in this province? The answer is no. Will it reduce the cost of doing business in this province? The answer is no.

I know in my riding we often hear this phrase now: that this McGuinty government is nothing but a tall, thin streak of misery in this province. That's what they've been doing with this province.

This is fluff and nonsense. It has nothing to do with good governance. It has nothing to do with good government. The daily papers have labelled this as Canada's worst government. We have not seen any improvement in openness and transparency, and we see a significant delegation of authority to unelected, unaccountable people, and more and more regulations being moved out of the Legislature, out of the executive council. We know the dangers of this, but this government continues to go down the same track. It is a track, like I said, where Ontario now is the worst-performing province economically in this Confederation, and we have the worst government—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan did his homework. He had some good material. My frustration, and it will continue to be my frustration, is that they may have good material—and he presented it well—but unfortunately they don't listen to this side of the House. When I'm in committee, there will be five members—and I do remember a couple of members who are in here who walked out during our presentation, and there were several organizations in Ontario we were representing. They were playing with their BlackBerrys, didn't listen, didn't even want to deal with it, didn't want to deal with the seniors' bill. Ninety amendments, and they took one little amendment that they had screwed up—90 amendments they didn't deal with.

So when they stand up and criticize this side of the House—that's true, they may have their opinion. But in all fairness, he can't stand up and say that they listened to us in committee, that they take our amendments, that they deal with them. They don't. It's just a rubber-stamp. They take their marching orders. They do what the

Premier tells them. They don't even listen to what we've got to present, and they've missed a lot of good things.

Maybe that's why the people of Ontario have caught on and now they're at 80% bad-listed. That tells me that even the people who don't do this on a daily basis are starting to pay attention. I'll tell you right now that next year there's going to be a rude awakening. Day in and day out, we keep hammering and hammering, and I think it's finally coming home to roost. I think the people understand now. They know what we have to deal with. They know what our frustration is.

You can present well and, with all due respect, have research that suits your side of the argument, but it certainly isn't a good argument when you don't listen to the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly appreciated the very articulate comments that were put forward this afternoon by my friend the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

We heard a lot in this House that we should be listening. Well, if we had listened to the opposition and the third party, all those subway cars would have been built by Siemens in Mexico. But this member stood up for the CAW in Thunder Bay and made sure that those subway cars were going to be built by the people in his community, and not Mexico. These were the people over here who wanted to transfer all of that work to Mexico. Well, this member did his job.

Secondly, this member stood up when they were looking for ways to convert the coal-fired plant at Atikokan, to make sure that biomass would be put in place to fire that plant. That's been accomplished.

1800

This is a member who thoroughly understands what good government is all about. He was a very distinguished member of city council in Thunder Bay. He knows first-hand about all that downloading over eight years that effectively killed municipal government in the province of Ontario.

He fundamentally understands what good government is all about. He talked to the bill in very clear-cut terms about how things are going to be changed through this bill, the amendments to various statutes—he presented the case in a very effective, honest and forthright manner. So thank goodness we have the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who can really take the time in this House to set the record straight, as he does time and time again.

He talked about the sale of the 407. I can tell you that the good folks in Madrid today are still drinking the pina colodas with the money that they're getting from the 407 sell-off. It was the biggest sell-off in Ontario political history, and thank goodness we have the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide some comments to the address made by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

I can appreciate that he mentioned his municipal experience. Way back when, when I had long flowing locks as a young child, I was involved in municipal politics, and I certainly enjoyed that. I remember when I was first elected, it was funny, because—we have a municipal election next week—we had a 60% turnover in that council back in 1982. It was one of those things that you really understand about consultation when you're part of a sweep on a municipal council, and you really realize, especially after you're knocking on doors and going to all-candidates meetings, what the public expects.

I just came through a provincial by-election in the spring. I knocked on a lot of doors, and I understand when we use the words “good government.” I mentioned in my address before the issue about slapping the words “good government” on a housekeeping bill. Over the time that I have been here in this House, over the last seven and a half months, I have to scratch my head. Bill 191, the Far North Act: I was on committee, and I remember that just before we broke everyone was excited because they were going to go up north. In fact, there was a lot of jockeying for position to try to take that gig to go up to the Far North to take part in that consultation. It didn't happen.

I find out on Monday—I was in the riding, meeting with some MS people, and I understood that I was subbed in on the general government committee for Bill 72—another fancy name, the Water Opportunities Act. It's funny that you have a hearing that day, on Monday, in the middle of a municipal election, when that bill affects municipalities so much. I understand that there wasn't a municipal person that made a presentation on Monday. So when you talk about good government, you need to add consultation. This bill is just another housekeeping bill for this government. Good government—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Peterborough and Leeds–Grenville.

I will say back to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington that it's a bit surprising for him to continue to beat that same drum about whether or not this bill or any other bill is lowering costs for people in the province of Ontario. I would say to you, sir, that you gave up that ground about eight or 10 years ago when you brought about the biggest tax shift in the history of the province of Ontario, when you downloaded significant costs that will be there annually, year over year, onto the backs of residential property taxpayers in the province of Ontario. It was a significant cost to the residences in my riding in the city of Thunder Bay.

He talked about openness as well. Freedom of information and expanding the powers of the Auditor General are two things that we have significantly expanded. Your party voted against that, yet you stand in your place and pretend like those things didn't happen. I'm not sure why, because every time you do, you know

the response is coming that you voted against that stuff. We're expanding the role of the auditor, and we're expanding the ability of more organizations to be subject to FOI.

The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, I want to thank you for your comments. It is fair to say that we all wish that perhaps from time to time this place could run a little smoother and a little better, but I did think, while you were speaking, that there have been a couple of examples of some progress being made. We have seen a few private members' bills come forward jointly now. Maybe it's small steps, maybe it's baby steps, but there's been some progress, perhaps not as far as we all wish it would go, and sometimes all of us roll our eyes at the goings-on in this place. But it's perhaps an example of a small step.

To the member from Leeds-Grenville, thank you for your comment. You talked about the Water Opportunities Act and the municipalities not being there. You should know that this piece of legislation went through the AMO MOU table that we set up when we came to government. All legislation affecting them goes to them; this did as well.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Acting Premier. This matter will be debated now. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday during question period I asked a civilized question of the Acting Premier about Hamilton's community care access centre's reported \$12 million in cuts. I informed the House that these cuts will effectively grind the home care and long-term-care systems to a halt and force our hospitals into a tailspin and a crisis of epic proportions.

My concern for vulnerable citizens, the seniors of my city, was sincere, and I think it warranted an appropriate response from this government. Rather than address the immediate concerns of Hamiltonians, the minister reverted to the Liberal mantra of attacking the questioner and suggesting that because we did not support a government piece of legislation, we're somehow not representing our constituents. The Acting Premier knows very well that many pieces of legislation contain partisan bits that cannot be supported by opposition members. To use these politically motivated pieces of legislation as an answer to a question in this House shows a contempt for the people of Ontario who are represented by opposition members.

The Acting Premier also suggested that, "When it comes time, we will be back to the people of Hamilton, as the good representatives from Hamilton are today"—I'm assuming she's referring to the MPPs for Hamilton Centre and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek—"to tell them that those great institutions offering services to their community can do so because of the infusion of funding" by this government.

What that tells me is that more money will come to Hamilton in a nice little election-vote-buying package, not because the money should have been there at the outset and this government messed up the health file almost beyond repair, but because it might buy votes in Hamilton.

When I asked, "Will this government stop the shell game and actually address the root problem and funding shortfalls in Hamilton now?" the Acting Premier went back into the same rant without addressing the actual question.

It's time that this government began to answer the questions asked by opposition members. I've noticed that when one of their caucus colleagues asks a well-crafted softball question, the responses are more of a ministerial statement, so I guess they can't even figure out how to answer their own questions. It's time for this governing group to respond to the questions being asked on behalf of all Ontarians. It's time for an answer, not an attack. It's time to listen, not applaud, yell and drown out the representatives of the people with standing ovations and clapping. It's time for this government to come clean and give the people of Ontario what they want: honest answers to the questions that they're asking.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm pleased to be here to address the concerns of the member opposite. I want to start by saying that we have increased the budget of the CCAC: a \$61-million increase in funding, 73%, since 2003-04. Part of this is the aging-at-home strategy. Over \$93 million in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN has been put toward this four-year local aging-at-home strategy that they're carrying on. We're going to ensure that the clients are provided with the care suited to their medical condition.

We're absolutely committed to providing more money toward community support services. In fact, proportionately we have increased funding to the community sector at a greater rate than hospitals, and we have seen significant reductions in the alternative-level-of-care rate in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN as a direct result of our aging-at-home programs. I know the LHIN is working very hard with the CCAC to serve more and more clients.

One of the ways the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN and its hospitals are reducing the amount of time that residents spend waiting in the emergency room is by improving the discharge process for hospital in-patients and those designated alternate level of care. Over the past year, the LHIN has significantly reduced the

ALC acute rate, from 22.5% in April 2009 to 13.3% as of May 2010. This reduction means that more people are moving into more appropriate care settings rather than staying in hospital. It also means that more people who need to be admitted to hospital now have greater access to beds.

This success is due in part to the LHIN's assess-restore initiative. Assess-restore units provide an appropriate setting for patients to regain strength and functioning, to enable them to return home or to be assessed at a level of support needed. There are 92 assess-restore beds throughout the LHIN distributed across these locations: Brantwood Lifecare Centre in Burlington; Haldimand War Memorial Hospital in Hagersville; St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton; Brant Community Health Care System; and the Niagara Health System. The assess-restore program has been successful in enabling patients to return home, and the program sites report that approximately 80% of patients discharged from this program's beds go home.

As I close, I'd like to read to the member a quote from the Hamilton Spectator from June of this year. It says:

"Kudos to our local health integration network (LHIN) for bringing together health care professionals from inside and outside hospitals to integrate the approach to foot care in our area.

"The LHIN has pumped almost \$800,000 into two programs, accessible to those who are at risk and aimed at preventing the problems that can lead to foot ulcers and amputations.

"Most average citizens don't likely know what the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN is and what it does. In a lot of ways, that doesn't really matter. What does matter is that the LHIN is doing what it was created for about four years ago."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1812.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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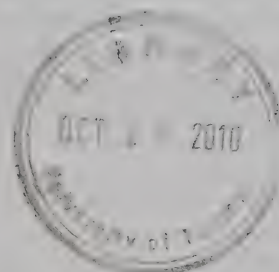
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Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 20 October 2010

Mercredi 20 octobre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report of the Auditor General entitled Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations. For members' information, these will be momentarily available in the side lobbies.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PENSION REFORM

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important. It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Phillips has moved government notice of motion number 30. Debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I, of course, fully endorse the motion. It is my intent to share the majority of my time with the member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Applause.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you, everyone. It's my pleasure to join in the debate this morning and to follow the deputy House leader in his eloquent remarks. Thank you for that; it was wonderful—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Very in depth.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: —and very in depth. Thank you, Deputy.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Say hi to your mom.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Good morning, Mom. The member from Welland is here, and he sends his sympathies for your broken foot, so thank you for that. We hope you're doing okay.

Our government has become increasingly concerned, of course, especially since the global economic downturn, that many Canadians are not saving adequately for retirement. Recent research, policy work and public consultations have confirmed that although our retirement income system has many strengths, a significant minority of Canadians in the future are likely to experience a material decrease in their standard of living upon retirement, unless changes are made.

As you know, on Monday in the Legislature, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, tabled the following motion that we just heard: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important. It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP."

Pension and retirement income system reforms have been of central importance to this government. The McGuinty government recognized that despite the vital importance of pension plans to the health of Ontario's economy, it had been more than 20 years since there had been significant pension reform in this province. That is why, since March 2009, our government has taken a number of important steps to address employment pension system issues. For example, we introduced a temporary solvency funding relief program to protect jobs and families; we're working to simplify pension division when a marriage ends; we initiated the first-ever actuarial study to examine the financial health of the pension benefits guarantee fund; and we established the Advisory Council on Pensions and Retirement Income. We also initiated technical discussions with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries about funding rules for defined benefit pension plans.

In April of this year, the House unanimously passed Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. It built upon the recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions, and it helps the pension system adapt to economic changes while balancing the need for benefit security. Specifically, Bill 236 provides for the restructuring of pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations, while protecting benefit security for plan members and for pensioners. It clarifies the benefits of plan

members affected by layoffs and it eliminates partial windups. It increases the transparency and access to information for plan members and for pensioners. It enhances the pension regulator's ability to oversee pension plans. Finally, it improves plan administration and reduces compliance costs.

0910

This government was clear from the outset that Bill 236 was the first part of a multi-step process to update and to improve the employment pension system. In fact, in the 2010 budget, we committed to introducing further pension reforms, and we were true to our word.

Yesterday, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan stood in the House and introduced Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. This new bill is a result of extensive consultations, and it builds upon the Pension Benefits Amendment Act. It proposes to make several amendments to the Pension Benefits Act.

Our proposed legislation would strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvements. It would also provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans that meet specific specified criteria. It proposes to clarify pension surplus rules and provide a binding dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surplus should be allocated on windup. It would also provide a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by limiting exposure to the cost of benefit improvements that occur close to plan windup and reduce risk to taxpayers in the future. Furthermore, this proposed legislation would strengthen the regulator's role and improve plan administration.

Should this new bill pass, the government would have responded to about two thirds of the 142 recommendations in the expert commission's report addressed to the Ontario government. Remaining recommendations would be considered for inclusion in future reforms.

But we must recognize that in order to fully modernize and strengthen the retirement system in Ontario, this government must work with other governments and the private sector. It's said that the Canadian retirement income system, or the RIS, is composed of three pillars. I'd just like to go over and explain each of those three pillars.

Two programs administered by the federal government and financed out of general tax revenues comprise the first pillar: old age security, or OAS, and the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. OAS and GIS combine to provide a minimum-income guarantee for older Canadians. Most provinces provide income-tested top-ups to the OAS and the GIS.

The Canada pension plan makes up the second pillar. The CPP is a compulsory earnings-related program that replaces up to 25% of average wages and salaries based on an individual's career and average earnings. When

combined with OAS and GIS, the CPP allows a person with half of the average wage to maintain his or her standard of living in retirement. For people with higher levels of earnings, however, additional income is needed from the third pillar to meet this objective.

The third pillar, made up of privately administered employment pension plans and registered retirement savings plans, is extremely diverse. The third pillar is privately administered but receives government support in the form of special tax measures and legislated minimum standards. Employment pension plans may be either defined benefit or defined contribution plans. A growing number combine elements of both plans. Until recently, male employees were more likely than females to be employment pension plan members, but that's no longer the case.

We know that the current three pillars for providing for Canadians in retirement are strong. In fact, according to a 2009 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report, they had this to say: "Old age income safety-nets in Canada are amongst the highest in the OECD, helping Canada have one of the lowest poverty levels" amongst seniors.

We know it's an excellent vehicle for helping Canadians in retirement, but we also know that it can be enhanced to ensure more Canadians have adequate savings. In his recent report prepared for the Ontario government, pension expert Bob Baldwin had this to say: "The status quo is an option. However, it is an option that may leave a significant minority of people ... facing a decline in their standard of living in retirement...."

While governments cannot replace investment losses or guarantee future returns, we do have the tools to make saving and planning for retirement easier, more affordable and more secure. Taking steps now will help Ontarians down the road, both as taxpayers and as future retirees. So while this government has made, and continues to make, steps to strengthen the first and the third pillars, we recognize that we must also be proactive in strengthening the second and third pillars.

Ontario supports a pan-Canadian approach to reforms that will provide tomorrow's seniors with better, lower-cost tools to maintain their standard of living in retirement. Reforms should build upon the strengths and institutions of the existing retirement income system, which has significantly reduced poverty among seniors and currently allows more Canadians to maintain a similar standard of living both before and after retirement.

That is why the Ontario government has been calling for a balanced approach to retirement income reform which would include a phased-in, fully funded, modest increase to the CPP as well as measures to encourage pension innovation. The CPP is a safe and secure means for Canadians to build retirement savings at a low cost. It is a made-in-Canada success story.

This discussion, of course, warrants an explanation, then, of the CPP. When it was created, CPP benefits were considered sufficient to provide an adequate amount of retirement income for most workers when combined with

contributions from the other two pillars. Unfortunately, the CPP may no longer be meeting the income-replacement needs of many Ontarians.

As a whole, we're saving less than we once did, fewer people are taking advantage of voluntary tax-assisted savings opportunities and a smaller portion of the working population today has access to employment pension plans. This means that a significant number of Ontarians could experience a material decrease in their standard of living.

CPP benefits are designed to replace about 25% of a contributor's career average pensionable earnings. The maximum CPP new retirement benefit in 2010 is \$934.17 per month, or \$11,210 per year. However, most beneficiaries do not receive the maximum benefit. In 2008, only 12% of the new male retirement beneficiaries and 2% of the new female beneficiaries received the maximum pension. The average new CPP pension paid in January 2010 was \$6,283 on an annualized basis—just 56% of the maximum benefit.

The difference between the maximum benefit and what people actually receive is due in part to the fact that CPP benefits are based on career average earnings. Annual earnings can vary widely over a person's working life, particularly at the beginning and at the end of their career. Average earnings also increase substantially with age. Many workers with earnings significantly above the year's maximum pensionable earnings for most of their career have a number of years with lower earnings. Since CPP benefits are paid on average earnings over an entire career, many contributors do not receive the maximum CPP benefit at retirement.

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The CPP provides a secure, fully indexed, defined benefit pension to virtually all working Canadians, as well as survivor and disability benefits, and is fully portable across Canada. CPP does not carry the risk of default that is inherent in private plans due to bankruptcy or insolvency of the employer. CPP administrative costs, which are 2.2% of plan expenditures, are less than half of most employment pension plans. Costs associated with RRSPs are also high compared to the CPP. Many RRSPs have charges of 2% of assets per year or more, which can erode investment gains over time. CPP costs include the cost of administering pensions, while RRSP costs do not. Almost all labour force participants contribute to and will receive pensions from the CPP, or possibly QPP.

The unique attributes of the CPP make its expansion an attractive option for bolstering retirement incomes. That's why the government of Ontario, along with the federal government and other provinces and territories, has been assessing options for expansion of the CPP. Any improvements would have to be pre-funded, inter-generationally equitable and affordable for working people and for employers.

This government has repeatedly called for the federal government and all provinces and territories to work together to amend the CPP. Reforms to the CPP will require the approval of the federal government and of

two thirds of the provinces with two thirds of the population. Compromise will be necessary, and that's why we've said that any CPP increase should be modest. We should also be prepared to phase it in to better reflect the current state of the economy and to ensure a smooth transition for families and for businesses.

Now we must all work together to build an approach to retirement income and pension reform that builds enough consensus among Canadians to make these reforms a reality. Canadians want to see their governments working together constructively to serve the greater good, especially in times of economic challenge. I believe that pension and retirement income reform is a chance to show Canadians that different levels of government of different political stripes, although they may not always agree, can work together to build consensus. Indeed, Ontario's plan to strengthen the retirement income system has been supported by federal and provincial governments of three political stripes: Conservative, Liberal and NDP. Today, our government is inviting opposition members of this House to join in that growing consensus. This House was able to work together in achieving all-party consent for the passage of Bill 236, our first pension reform bill. Our government's hope is that we can build on that all-party agreement with the motion that is before us today.

The economic downturn highlighted the fact that we need to examine the broader issues of retirement income adequacy and pension coverage to ensure our retirement income system meets the needs of a changing economy and changing demographics. As elected officials, we have a responsibility to look out not only for those who have workplace pension plans, but also for the majority of Ontarians who do not.

The economy of our province receives tremendous advantages from a healthy pension system. Our economy greatly benefits from Ontario retirees with adequate and secure retirement incomes, as they can use their incomes to pay for goods and services. So the retirement incomes, in turn, generate jobs for younger Ontarians. When Ontario retirees can pay for these goods and services with their own pensions, it helps to reduce the demand for taxpayer dollars.

Over the coming 20 years, the portion of the population over 65 will nearly double, from 13.4% in 2007 to 23.2% in 2030, and continue to increase to 26.3% in 2050. Thus, the success, or lack of success, achieved in providing adequate incomes to older and largely retired populations will have an increasing impact on the economic and social well-being of the population in general.

As Ontario's population ages and more and more Ontarians reach retirement age, it is critical that we take the necessary steps now to ensure that we do all that we can to preserve the spending power of seniors. This is crucial to the health of our economy. More importantly, we have an obligation to create the strongest environment for the financial security of Ontarians in their retirement, because they have earned that from our government. It is their hard work and their dedication that drive the economy of our province and make it such an attractive place

to live and to invest. Ontario's workforce has built the quality of life, and they have earned the right to continue to enjoy it upon their retirement.

In summary, this government is working to ensure that all Ontarians have the tools necessary to achieve their full potential and to live with dignity. Making changes today to strengthen and improve Ontario's and Canada's retirement income system will ensure that future Ontarians will have a brighter tomorrow. That is why I'm calling for the support of this House in voting for our motion for a modest and a gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan, which will benefit all Ontarians, including the two thirds of Ontarians who do not have a workplace pension and who, therefore, need the additional support of a stronger second pillar.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to be able to speak on the motion this morning, and I would like to begin just by questioning why the government has put this motion forward at all. I'll make a few points on that.

First of all, the government just introduced yesterday a new pension bill, which we are going to be briefed on later in the week; it's a fairly comprehensive, technical pension bill to do with defined benefit pension plans. That was just introduced; I assume that probably next week it will be called for debate. But what the force of this motion is going to be and why we're debating it—particularly when both the federal Minister of Finance and Ontario's Minister of Finance seem to be in agreement on the motion. So I'm not quite sure why we need a motion from the Ontario Legislature to agree to something that they're both agreeing on already anyway.

The motion is a little vague in its wording: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important." How can you disagree with that? "It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP."

As I say, that's the motion. It's a little vague. I mean, what does "expansion" necessarily mean? I assume that means an enhancement, although I'm guessing on that. Expansion could also mean changing the eligibility criteria to people who don't contribute or to lowering the age, something like that. But I will point out that the finance ministers of Ontario and Canada already agree to this, so I'm not quite sure why the Ontario Legislature needs to debate it. I will be proposing an amendment to this motion as well, just to recognize that fiscal realities have to be taken into consideration in terms of approaching this situation as well.

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I have a letter from the federal Minister of Finance on the issue of pensions and what should be done that he

wrote to the Ontario Minister of Finance in June, before they had the June meeting in Prince Edward Island. In it he states:

"I am writing to share with you the proposed agenda for our upcoming meeting of Ministers of Finance and Treasurers on June 13th and 14th on Prince Edward Island.

"Coming out of the meeting, there will be a great deal of attention on our discussions about the retirement income system. It is essential that we continue to work collaboratively on this important matter. I hope we can agree on a course of action to follow and, to that end, I am writing to provide you with my perspective on the way forward on this issue.

"My recent consultations across the country and the work done by our officials since we last met have convinced me that we should seriously consider several specific steps to improve our retirement income system. These improvements would build on the strengths of our system, which includes a healthy balance between government and private sector involvement, with both mandatory and voluntary savings elements.

"There is more that can be done to encourage private savings and broaden coverage by removing barriers that currently prevent some Canadians, such as the self-employed, from participating in registered pension plans. I believe we should work together toward pension innovations that would allow financial institutions and insurance companies to offer broad-based defined contribution pension arrangements to multiple employers, all employees, and to the self employed. This approach will help reduce costs of defined contribution plans for individuals and employers by providing opportunities for greater pooling of savings, without imposing the costs of a new administrative apparatus. It will help enhance retirement savings and pension coverage, without compromising our current system and without passing costs on to future generations.

"These pension innovations would require changes to the federal tax rules as well as federal-provincial-territorial collaboration on modifications to pension standards. I also think we can do more together to help people saving for retirement to make better-informed decisions, including supporting greater financial literacy and disclosure in relation to retirement savings. Actions towards these objectives will build on the work of the Task Force on Financial Literacy which is to report in December.

"Even with such improvements, I am concerned that some Canadians may not save enough for their retirement. In my consultations, I heard strong support for the Canada pension plan and the central role that it plays in our government-supported retirement income system." This is kind of the key part as it pertains to the motion today, and this is the federal finance minister's letter to the Ontario finance minister. "I believe that we should consider a modest, phased-in, and fully funded enhancement to defined benefits under the Canada pension plan in order to increase savings adequacy in the future. Changes to the Canada pension plan require significant

provincial support, and I will be particularly interested in getting your perspective on the possible expansion of the Canada pension plan when we meet in PEI.

"I believe that the types of measures I have set out above represent a targeted, balanced approach to further improving Canada's retirement income system. I look forward to a fruitful discussion."

I would say that I agree with most of what the federal finance minister has said in that letter, but as it pertains to the motion before us, he has very clearly stated that he supports "a modest, phased-in, and fully funded enhancement"—he used the word "enhancement," which is little clearer than "expansion." I'm not sure why we're discussing this motion, when it's obvious the federal finance minister already does support it. Obviously, the provincial finance minister does as well.

I have a letter from him to Mr. Flaherty. I won't read the whole letter. But he does state in it that Ontario supports—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: The member from Durham is giving me encouragement over there.

The letter from Minister Duncan to Mr. Flaherty says:

"In the lead-up to the upcoming finance ministers' meeting in Prince Edward Island, I wanted to take the opportunity to communicate with you about Ontario's position on strengthening Canada's retirement income system. I have appreciated the opportunity to work together constructively on this important issue and trust we will continue to have the opportunity to do so in PEI and in the months beyond.

"I have become increasingly concerned, especially since the global economic downturn, that many Canadians are not saving adequately for retirement. Recent research, policy work, and public consultations have confirmed that although our retirement income system has many strengths, a significant minority of Canadians in the future are likely to experience a material decrease in their standard of living upon retirement unless changes are made.

"Ontario supports a pan-Canadian approach to the reform that will provide tomorrow's seniors with better, lower-cost tools to maintain their standard of living in retirement." I support that notion that it should be a pan-Canadian approach so it's more affordable. "Reforms should build upon the strengths and institutions of the existing retirement income system, which has significantly reduced poverty among seniors and currently allows most Canadians to maintain a similar standard of living before and after retirement.

"Ontario supports a multi-pronged approach to reform that would strengthen both the second and third pillars of the system.

"First, I believe we can make regulatory changes to harness Canada's world-leading private-sector expertise, including financial institutions and others, to provide more efficient, lower-cost retirement options." I think that is a goal we need to go after. "Current tax and pension rules say that defined contribution pension plans can

only be offered where there is an employment relationship. This limits the retirement savings options available to the self-employed and those who work for small businesses. By changing these laws, we can expand the range of people who can set up pension plans and the range of people who can access them. We could allow large, multi-employer defined contribution pension plans with low administrative costs to provide portable coverage to more Canadians." The portable part of it is why "pan-Canadian" makes sense. People are moving around to different jobs around the country. Portability is important.

"Second, I believe we should seriously consider building on the strengths of the CPP through a phased-in, moderate increase to retirement and survivor benefits. CPP's guaranteed benefits are secure, inflation-indexed and portable. The average CPP benefit is about \$6,000 per year, and the maximum is about \$11,000 per year—lower than the public employment-related pensions of most other similar countries. Any improvements would have to be pre-funded, intergenerationally equitable, and affordable for working people and employers."

That's the key part of it as it pertains to the motion today, and what he says is identical to what the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, says.

Based on that, other than the fact that the government needs filler because they have virtually nothing on their agenda, I'm not quite sure why we're debating this motion this morning. As I say, it's more or less filler. We had the member from Brant two weeks ago, when we had an opposition day motion here, talking about the fact that motions of the Ontario Legislature don't really mean anything. Yet here we're talking about a motion this morning on a point on which there's agreement between the federal minister and the provincial finance minister, at a time when the government has just introduced a pension bill which is much more detailed and will address some of the very specific concerns with defined benefit plans and perhaps—I have to get my briefing on it—deal with some more options for defined contribution plans as well.

There's no doubt that there is, as the letter has referenced, a minority of Canadians who are not saving enough for retirement. I think if you're on the lower level of the income scale, with the CPP, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, when you retire, your income will probably be about the same, and I've got some facts to back that up. But it's that middle class that, in many cases, is not saving enough for retirement. We do need to look at mechanisms—private sector and others—and as was mentioned, financial literacy and education, to get middle-income earners to plan ahead and save more toward their retirement.

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I would also just like to caution that when we're looking at something like improving the benefits of the Canada pension plan, you have to be very careful, because it is essentially a payroll tax. Companies will pay more, and individuals will pay more.

We just learned yesterday that the economy is fragile. We saw yesterday that the Bank of Canada decided not to increase interest rates because of the fragile state of the economy:

“Economy Too Fragile for Rate Hike, Bank Says

“The Bank of Canada sees slower growth on the horizon and has no plans to raise interest rates in the short term.”

So I will be filing an amendment to this motion to recognize that the state of the economy must be taken into consideration, and that to raise payroll taxes at a time when the economy is fragile will hurt the economy, and the state of the economy will affect the number of people with jobs, etc. That is something we very much need to be conscious of.

I would like to make an amendment to this motion. I would like to add to the motion, after “forward on the expansion of the CPP,” the words “so long as there is recognition of the fragile nature of the economy and that increasing payroll taxes at a time of economic instability is not advisable.”

I'll give this to the page to pass on to the Speaker, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved to amend the motion, following the words “forward on the expansion of the CPP,” by adding the words “so long as there is recognition of the fragile nature of the economy and that increasing payroll taxes at a time of economic instability is not advisable.”

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Norm Miller: I think that, over time, having modest increases is a reasonable objective, but we have to be very wary of the fact that if you increase taxes, you can have a negative effect on the prospects of the economy, on jobs, job creation, etc. That's why I put forward that amendment. You need to be very, very cautious, particularly in light of the fragile economy and particularly in light of all the tax increases we've seen here in the province of Ontario, huge increases in so many different ways that are affecting the ability of the economy to sustain itself; I won't go through the list, but the health tax and the eco tax, which is now off the shelf, and many, many other taxes. Workers' compensation, WSIB, has become a huge, huge problem in the province of Ontario under this government, and that's another payroll tax as well. Those taxes are a negative for the economy.

I think that WSIB has become a bit of a political football here in the last number of years. We've seen the unfunded liability of the WSIB double in the last six years. I believe it's about \$12 billion; it was roughly \$6 billion before. That's not reflected, I might add, on the books of the province of Ontario. I think it should be, but at this time, the way the accounting is done, it's not counted as part of the debt of the province of Ontario. As I say, that's something that I think should be included.

Currently, the system we have in Canada—first of all, as I pointed out, I think that, with pensions, a pan-Canadian approach is the wiser approach. We have not a bad system right now, in terms of old age security,

guaranteed income supplement and the Canada pension plan. That looks after those people who are at the lower income levels fairly well. But the problem is sort of in the middle class.

I'm just looking for some information I had on that. Yes, here it is: “The Baldwin report says that the public pension programs of old age security, the guaranteed income supplement and maximum CPP retirement benefits together replace 73% of pre-retirement earnings for those earning up to half average wages and salaries”—so that's the lower level of the income spectrum—“42% of those earning the average wage ... but only 21% for those earning twice average wages and salaries. Baldwin notes that ‘an implicit assumption of Canadian pension policy has been that beyond a certain level of earnings, people should look after themselves.’”

I would agree with that statement. I think that the CPP and those three tiers of our retirement income system shouldn't necessarily be providing us with a life of luxury, but it should provide a reasonable, modest level of retirement income. There is an obligation—I think it's the Conservative philosophy—amongst all of us as individuals to plan for retirement. That's where things like literacy and help in the schools, to get people thinking about saving at a young age, are important. The earlier you start, the easier it is to save large amounts of money for retirement. As soon as you can start saving even a little bit of money over time, you will—it's a lot easier than if you're getting towards my age and you're just starting to think about saving for retirement. There's not a lot of time to compound the interest and to build up a large nest egg. So it's important to start at a young age.

As I say, just getting back, I've made an amendment to recognize that our party is not in favour of increasing payroll taxes.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: And as the member for Durham—who I know is keen to speak to this, and I will share some time with him—wants to speak, I will wrap up shortly.

As I say, I think this motion this morning is essentially filler. We've got a comprehensive bill that's going to be debated probably next week on pensions. I think this is filler because the government doesn't have much on the docket.

I read letters from both the Ontario finance minister and the federal finance minister that show they're in agreement on this, so it doesn't make a lot of sense for us to be debating this at this time.

With that, I will pass on my time to the member from Durham, who, as usual, has done a lot of research on pensions and is keen to speak to this debate today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not too sure how much time—how the rotation goes here, but I'll stick with it.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, our critic for financial matters, has, I believe, put a fair amount of very respectable and balanced comment on the record

with respect to, first, protecting vulnerable people, but also the issue of personal responsibility. So I commend him.

In fact, our leader, Tim Hudak, gave us a bit of a pep talk in caucus yesterday—I shouldn't talk about this—saying to make sure that we look after families in Ontario. That's his main concern. He starts at the kitchen table and says that you have to have a strong economy.

How this thing really fits together is, most of the suggestions that I hear from the government side, Premier McGuinty's side—it's basically like a payroll tax solution. That might not be something that we're really in favour of, at a time when we have a languishing economy in Ontario. A lot of people, and employers as well, for that matter, simply aren't seeing any black ink—mostly red ink.

We say this is Small Business Week in Ontario, and a lot of those people who are working are spending their equity. They financed their corner store, their hardware store, their franchise operation by debt. They're actually creating their own job by borrowing money against capital, maybe taking a mortgage on their house or whatever, to get that franchise operation or the hardware store or whatever it is they're operating, and they don't have a pension.

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As has been said by the experts in some of the research done—I think I just want to slow it down a bit here. In the research done by the law firm Osler, Hoskin it's very clear, and even if you look back at the Arthurs report, the expert panel, and I think the minister who started off the debate this morning said it, basically two thirds of people don't have a pension. That would include most of us here. I should say this openly on the record: There is a pension here provincially. It's not the traditional pension; it's actually a defined contribution plan. That's the new type of pension.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's not like the federal one.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, no, it's not like the old one here. The member from St. Catharines, the Minister of Community Safety, does know of what he speaks. He's one of the senior members here, and he knows that the public's support for public sector pensions, MPs' or MPPs', is quite questionable; I don't think there's much support for it at all, given the state of the economy. We live with that, we live under the scrutiny of the public, not even in a partisan way on that thing, because I think public service is a laudable contribution to society and most members take it quite seriously.

But when you look at some of the expert committee reports, especially the Arthurs report—I commend the province for doing that; in fact, I commend the federal government for taking a lead. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty convening the December Whitehorse conference on pensions is a very important first step; that's exactly what it is.

Mr. Norm Miller: Prince Edward Island in June.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, there's another one scheduled, as the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka says. I

think they're on the right track, recognizing that the fundamentals of pensions have gone away; they have changed over time.

Now, we should keep this in mind. Let's put it into a real context this morning. Here is the reality test: What's the biggest issue in the media today? The strikes in France, shutting down the country of France. What is the issue? Pensions.

Interjection: Retirement age.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's not retirement age; it's pensions.

The way they're dealing with it is extending it to 62 from 60, mandatory retirement. In Canada I think also there's some advice here. I don't believe they're doing the right thing by advancing the CPP. You can now start to collect it at 55, I believe; maybe it's 60. But the key here is, that's spending money ahead. I think what it's being done for is to take people out of the workforce. They've been laid off early; there's a lot of resizing of companies. That may not be on the topic here this morning, but here is the real issue: employment.

Second Career is a good example. What are the jobs of the future? There's no more General Electric, there's no more General Motors, there's no more Nortel. Job for life? Finished. That era is over. I say that sadly, and with great concern, when we look at the pages here. Job for life is basically done, and so the employment forecasts for longevity have changed. Not only that; the whole assumptions around actuarial models are all changed. People aren't dying at 75; they're living to 95. You can't retire at 55 and live to 95 and only work 20 years. It doesn't make sense.

When you see some of the public things here today, they have 70-factor pensions and 85-factor pensions. Let's take, for instance, the 75-factor. What does that actually mean? A fireman might be a good example of the 75-factor. I'm not picking on them. They did not individually choose the rules; the fancy actuaries and pension fund managers figured out those rules. With 75-factor, you start when you're 25. You graduate from college and you're 25 with your training. They are trained; I respect that very highly. You work for 25 years; that makes you 50 years of age with 25 years, so you retire at 50. That's impossible. That simply doesn't work, period. Because you're going to retire at 50 and live to be 90. You worked 25 years and you're going to be off for 40 years? Wait a minute. And it's going to be calculated on your best three years? Wait a minute here. The first contribution to your pension—they are joint contributor pensions—is at 25, and you're making whatever that money is at that time; maybe up to 10% is the maximum you can contribute. Teachers contribute the maximum: 10% of their pay is put into the fund. Here's the issue: When you're 25—let's go back a few years ago.

I've looked at this; when I was a school trustee, it was a huge issue during the era—Mr. Bradley will remember that when Sean Conway was minister, the biggest issue was teachers' pensions. The government at the time tried to straighten it out, and they did a fairly good job

basically. I think they had all parties trying to work to get it solved. It is probably referred to as one of the most successful pension plans today. But by the way, the teachers' pension plan owes \$11 billion, and it's the best one.

Every single pension is bankrupt under today's assumptions. Not some, not just Nortel, not just General Motors, Stelco, Inco—what was the strike at Vale Inco about? Pensions; trying to move everybody from defined benefit to defined contribution. What's the issue in France? Today there's going to be a statement by the new Prime Minister of England, David Cameron. What's the issue? Pensions.

Pension funds have all melted away in the big melt-down in the economy. It's global. I think it's responsible for the federal government to take a lead. I commend the finance ministers from all the provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, BC. They're all a bit too aggressive on this. I think we need a pan-Canadian solution. It should probably be tied to a joint contribution plan. The joint contribution plan would be of course the general tax revenue, which helps people who aren't even working so that when they are too old to work or unable to work, there is something for them.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Did you send a report on pensions?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough is quite right. He as a person follows this, I'm sure, as we all do, because this is a community of responsibility that we have here and all members should be trying to do the right thing and respecting the balance. As the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, our critic, made very clear, we can't unduly burden employers to take and shoulder all this responsibility.

If you look at this new bill—in fairness, we have the motion here, and we actually have an amended motion by the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka. Our critic has moved an amendment which really says, “so long as we have regard for the fragile nature of our economy, it would not be advisable to increase payroll taxes at this time.” I think we kind of agree with that. In fact, the Premier, in fairness, I think reads the tea leaves fairly well. He cancelled the eco tax. Thank God. He should be thinking about cancelling the hydro tax.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He should; people are struggling. The member from Northumberland knows that. You, I'm sure, have different things on weekends and you hear from different people. They interpret their frustration personally on Premier McGuinty.

In fact, this is a huge problem. By listening to people and doing the right thing, I think people will appreciate that. This motion here today is a bit artificial. I put this in the context that, yes, it's an important issue; yes, there have been meetings; yes, Bill 236 was the first stage of pension reform brought in in Ontario. They had the Arthurs expert panel report, which I'll mention briefly. Now, yesterday, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Duncan, introduced a bill, Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act,

which is amending Bill 236. Parts of Bill 236 are not even proclaimed. So let's not move too quickly here and create another mess like the eco tax, which was a bit of a mess. I'm surprised that Minister Gerretsen is still in cabinet.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, come on.

1000

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't mean this personally. Actually, I think he's happy to be moved. But the fact is, they put the tax of all tax—they put the Minister of Revenue at the time, Mr. Wilkinson, into the environment ministry. There's a lot of changes, in fact, recognizing that the assumptions made by the actuaries themselves are wrong.

What are those three assumptions? The three assumptions that the actuaries make are: first, age and life expectancy. As the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka said, the earlier you start to contribute to a plan for the future—which would be an annuity of some sort; there are different names for them: a RRIF, an annuity; same thing. That's the first one.

The second one is return on equity. What's the assumption, over the long term, for return on equity? Basically, most of the models have a 7% return on equity. If anybody's getting 7% today, they're keeping it a secret, because nobody's getting that. In fact, there might be a negative drag on return on equity. Lots of businesses today are really spending their equity by refinancing and retooling to become modern and efficient.

The third assumption, of course, is the number of people paying. Usually, the whole thing is shaped on a pyramid theory. Speaker, you are aware; I believe you were a financial adviser or a financial planner in your previous life. Companies today are outsourcing, downsizing, resizing, fragmentizing.

I take, for instance, the company I worked for, for 31 years: General Motors. When we were there, Bob Rae was the Premier of the province and Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie had this problem: They wanted to retool to be competitive and they had a so-called surplus in their pension. So they applied to the provincial government—the provincial government at that time of Bob Rae—and they rewrote a rule at that time, in 1993. The rule was referred to as “too big to fail.” “These companies are so big they'll never fail, so we'll allow them to use their surplus or not fully fund their pensions.” Unfortunately, that's when the government's fingerprints were on pensions. They allowed them to take the money out of the pensions, and that means they're guilty. They gave them the keys to take the money.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Did that happen during the Tory years?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it happened during the Bob Rae years. He's now a lawyer.

Mr. Paul Miller: You didn't change it.

Mr. John O'Toole: We did. No, no. They're barracking now. I want you to listen carefully.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it was a very important study. The issue that I wanted to bring to the table was that the "too big to fail" rule ended up pillaging all the pension funds.

Mr. Paul Miller: Did you pay them back?

Mr. John O'Toole: Just hang on for a second. Algoma used the money. It may have helped and saved jobs, so let's not criticize it. I think there was some merit. Bob Rae is not a stupid man, even though he has changed parties a couple of times. The fact is I wouldn't accuse him. He did it for the right reasons. Who would have known the future would collapse and cause the problem at Stelco? Air Canada is a federal one. Inco, GM—all of them took advantage of not fully funding the pension.

I gave you the three assumptions. We know those are in some need of repair or re-examination. We also know that the old rule of just tinkering around is not a good idea. This resolution is more or less saying Stephen Harper should fix the problem by increasing the CPP deduction. That's not the solution either, because most businesses will somehow avoid it by moving out of Ontario or whatever else because they're already taxed to the max.

Electricity—I was talking to businesses—is killing some of the business. I was at a thing last night where I talked to some business people. These are job creators and infrastructure people, and they were saying that their energy costs are going through the roof. So there's got to be something there.

My point here is that the pan-Canadian solution is the right solution. I think the province of Ontario, being one of the lead provinces, as well as the other provinces that are already moving forward should come together. But here's the deal: No employer today—in fact, most of the young people today will work on contract. They're not going to have a relationship job. They're going to say, "Look, I'm a great graphic artist; I'm a great software developer; I'm a great maintenance programmer; I'm a great tool and die maker"—whatever you are, you're going to be contracted by that employer to provide that service. You'll have meetings as teams once a week or once a month or whatever it is—quarterly, even—to get together and know the direction of that company. That could be a company made up of people with two or three different contracts, whether they're a software developer for a publisher, for a printer or for a small business that's doing some graphic work. Those could be their types of jobs. I know people living and working like this today. They make good money.

Here's the deal: We've got to make it more convenient for the individual to save for their own future. The RRSP rules are prehistoric, and the reason the federal government doesn't do more on the RRSP rules—I think the maximum contribution is \$15,500 a year. That's ridiculous. Somebody in that job that I just described, a software developer today, could be making \$200,000 or \$300,000 a year, working hard, but in five years they may be out of a job because they may not be keeping their skill set up with the new software stuff that's com-

ing online. We should change the rules for people to protect the amount of income they want some time in the future by having tax rules that make it to their advantage to save today.

In fact, today there's no advantage in saving because there's no interest on the money. If you look at young people today—and I've got five of them; they're all well educated and all that kind of stuff and making a lot more money than I do—if you gave them \$500, they would spend \$5,000.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, I wish they would. Here's the deal, though: They will have to learn to save for themselves. I really, firmly believe that, and I think the curriculum review is a good place to start. I say they should be aware of this at a level that's appropriate for the grade. I know I'm not an expert on this stuff. I think it should be in high school, though; it should be a mandatory subject.

I would even recommend—many years ago, I took the Ontario securities courses, about 10 courses. My undergraduate degree was economics and commerce courses. I find that kind of an attractive area, so I do pay attention to it. It hasn't done me much good; I'm still here, still working for a living. But the point is, at least I'm aware.

Now, this discussion this morning is about how do we solve this pension problem? It's immature and irresponsible to just throw the issue over the fence and blame Jim Flaherty. I think what our member from Parry Sound—Muskoka said is good, and I've heard it from—in fairness, the minister yesterday said it as well: We've got to get in this together. This is too big, too complicated, and the people of Ontario, indeed Canada, need a solution.

I'll tell you why: Our young people today are going to be more mobile, not just in the types of jobs but where they work themselves. My five children live in Australia, England and the Isle of Man; the oldest boy was in the air force, he was in Nova Scotia—I'm just saying, all over the world. I look at the young people here today. Many of their families came from different parts of the world. That's the future. We've got to have increased mobility and transferability of savings funds that are protected through pension rules. Individuals should be allowed to contribute maximum amounts.

One of the bright things that the federal government has done is the tax-free savings account. It's a small start. There's—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it will have problems in the future because it's deferred tax. And they've capped it by saying that you can only keep up to \$5,000, I think it is.

Mr. Paul Miller: Per year.

Mr. John O'Toole: Per year, which is fine. I wish it was more, but you're at least making money. But it assumes that money itself—where are you going to keep it? A stock? Most of the stocks are going into the tank. But you're taking the risk, not pooling the risk.

What the CPP plan from the NDP does is it pools the risk. That's really what it does. It says that we're going to

guarantee you—they want to double it to \$2,000 a month, I think. Isn't it? You want to double the CPP or something like that? Something like that—\$2,500. One of the panel said \$2,500. That's pooled the risk.

1010

I'll tell you now—I'm over 65—once you get a CPP benefit, Canada pension benefit, and you have a certain income threshold, it's all clawed back. You don't actually get it. It comes in as income and moves you up to a tax bracket where it's clawed back.

In fact, countries that are pool risks like Sweden—why do Björn Borg and all those tennis athletes move to the United States? Because there these universal benefits are clawed back once you hit about \$70,000 a year of income.

Here's what I did in RSPs: I set up a fund when I was working—all my life—bought shares and all that stuff. My brother is more of a freelance guy, and here I am saving. I didn't have the snowmobile; I bought RSPs. He had the snowmobile; he has no RSPs.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Hang on. So I get older and my universal benefits come in to help him.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a couple of brothers.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'd be mad at me.

My point being that the fact is there is a joint responsibility. No one should be left behind, but that does not mean that everybody's going to have cable TV with the movie channels, the extra benefits. Individuals should be allowed—in fact, encouraged—to save for their own future. That sounds a bit coarse, but some people would rather live for today, as I said in my own case. If you give some young people today \$1,000, they'd spend \$5,000. If you gave them \$10,000, they'd spend maybe \$20,000.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Are you saying they're not responsible?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. Look, I'm telling you; I know. They're capable. They're just aware that today—"Why would I put money in the bank? They're only paying 1%," but the value of their house or these assets they're buying, their Rolex watch or whatever, is going up faster than money itself.

Here's the last thing I'm going to say because I should save some time. Here's the real issue: The problem globally is even bigger than this pension debate. Right now, if you had a lot of assets, money, what would you put it in? Dollars? Bonds? Where would you put it? Say you had half a million or a million dollars or \$10 million or whatever.

I tell you what you wouldn't want to have it in: currency. Absolutely, money itself is the issue. The paper is a temporary store of value; you learn this in Finance 101. Money is a temporary store of value. I cut your grass, you give me \$20, and I take the \$20 and get my car fixed. It's a medium of exchange, money. What's going on today is all about trade, free trade.

Who holds all the American debt, the TARP money, the \$3 trillion? China. How much did the Olympics cost? Somebody tried to do a study. No one knows. They just print it. They just print it on the prospect of 8% to 15% growth. You can increase the money supply as fast as you grow the economy. Well, good luck. I think they have probably more debt than the United States, because if somebody called in all the money, pay on demand, there'd be no money.

When you look at the fluctuation in currencies today, we were at parity a week ago, and now it's down to 95 cents. The people trading money on currency exchange are actually the only ones making money. There is a huge monetary crisis in the world because people are artificially propping up or holding down the value of their currency to create trade. Well, it should be that income from whatever trades should be transaction-taxed.

But the key being here, if you had a lot of money—and Canada was criticized recently, and Ontario specifically, by some of the economists. The pools of pension funds are an example. Our pools are too small. People who want big money for Dubai and all these airports they're developing and stuff like that want large pools of capital. We don't have them. The US is running out of them as well.

Right now, I think currency is resources. That's why China's buying up the tar sands.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Petrodollars.

Mr. John O'Toole: Petrodollars, exactly right. The real issue here is not the pensions. Pensions is because the market fell apart. We're not getting 7%; you're lucky to get 1.5%. If the stuff you're buying is going up faster in cost, like resources, then the money you have in the bank—you're better off to have the resources.

These are big issues. They're not provincial specifically but they're important to every single person in this room today.

We've got to get the federal government to look at the jobs of the future. There's no more job for life; it's finished—maybe jobs in the armed forces or policing or something like that; I don't know. But even pilots today are finished at 45. Athletes who are making \$10 million, they're done at 40. People who are working with skills will be replaced and nanotechnology will make them redundant. Doctors who were trained 40 years ago—with all this robotic medicine, it's changing. There's no job for life.

We've got to face the fact that people and individuals have to be supported. Each one will have a different plan: "My objective is to have income in the future. Here's what I plan to save." Some of that should be protected through tax rules, and individuals and the province should protect the people who can't protect themselves. We have that responsibility collectively.

I have a lot to say on this. I hope we do the right thing and make sure that we don't hurt anyone.

The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka was kind enough to share his time with me, but I know the Speaker is eventually going to rule that I have to stop.

I do look forward to—I've already had a quick look at Bill 120. There are two really good suggestions in it, but they're all where you pay. The two new changes here, I think, are quite interesting too. They're going to have two new types of pensions. These are going to be—where the heck are they here? Anyway, there are two different funds, but it's up to you to contribute into them. They're called "additional voluntary contributions." Basically, that will be handled in definitions.

This resolution this morning, I think, is more talk about something that is kind of saying that Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Jim Flaherty are working on this issue. I think the House here supports the need to protect people's pensions and we have a collective responsibility to deal with that.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to introduce two constituents of mine from Peterborough who are in the members' east gallery today. Mr. and Mrs. Maloney and their son Frank purchased a "lunch with the MPP" at a charity function in Peterborough in July, so we're very happy to have the Maloney family here at Queen's Park with us today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize Kim Redmond and her grade 5 class from St. Joseph Catholic School in Uxbridge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce the students from the City Adult Learning Centre who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of page Carina Hochgeschurz and the MPP from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, to welcome her mother, Colleen, her father, Eric, her sister Katelyn, her grandmother Jan Latimer, her grandfather Ric Latimer, her aunt Linda Warren and her cousin Markie Warren, who are visiting her at Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to introduce the Honourable Guy E. Joseph, Minister of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities for St. Lucia.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last year, before the auditor reported on the worst scandal in Ontario history, Premier McGuinty

perched on the edge of his boardroom table and made a video confession. He apologized for allowing front-line health care dollars to be used for sweetheart deals with Liberal-friendly consultants, and said, "We're going to change the rules." The auditor's new report reveals he didn't change the rules that allowed hospitals to hand out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants.

Today, a year later, the Premier said that he will bring in tough new rules again. Why should Ontario families believe anything will change this time around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The first thing I want to do is to say thank you to the Auditor General for a very thorough report. He has recommended changes, and I'm very pleased to say that, this afternoon, I will be introducing legislation that responds to all of his recommendations.

Let's just remember that it was this government, in 2004, that gave the Auditor General oversight of hospitals. We were the government that gave the Auditor General oversight. We wanted him to do exactly this job. We wanted to find out what was going on that should not be going on.

We also asked the Auditor General specifically to go in and look at the use of consultants—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In the Premier's video confession, in his cleansing moment of contrition, the Premier blamed loopholes for Liberal-friendly consultants like Courtyard and Accenture getting rich from money for front-line health care. Then he turned to the camera and said, "We're going to close the loopholes." But the auditor's new report reveals that he not only didn't close the loopholes, he opened the doors so wide that millions more went to Liberal-friendly Courtyard and Accenture consultants.

You say that your new rules will fix this, but Ontario families have heard this all before. Why should Ontario families believe you?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: We are the government that gave the auditor responsibility that you refused to do. You wanted to keep this information hidden. You would not allow the Auditor General in to look at these very questions.

This government has a strong history of continually improving transparency and accountability. This builds on what we have done before. We gave the Auditor General the power. He went in and did a very thorough report. He has given us recommendations, and we are following each and every one of his recommendations. Indeed, we are going further than the Auditor General has recommended to include the broader public sector in this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families are smart enough to know that the Premier's video confessional last year was just a PR stunt to deflect attention from the auditor's eHealth report. Instead of learning his lesson

from eHealth, the Premier is still allowing Liberal insiders to be rewarded with sweetheart deals, only this time Ontario families are paying government to lobby government.

Now the Premier is announcing new legislation that he says will stop the sweetheart deals and expense boondoggles once and for all. Are you the only ones who don't realize that this feigned contrition is just PR?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I find it kind of remarkable that this is now the party that is positioning themselves as looking out for taxpayer dollars. Let's think about what we're doing. We have cut—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Halton, who's not in his seat—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton. The Minister of Community Safety. The Minister of Research and Innovation. The member from Oxford. The member from Nepean.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance. Minister of Community Safety, for the second time.

Minister?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Last week, we debated a motion that involved sending a memo to hospital CEOs. That's fine, I suppose, but we think we need to go much, much further. That is why we are legislating that hospitals will follow procurement rules. We will put an end to the practice of using lobbyists to lobby government. My question is: Will you support the bill? And if you can't even support the bill, will you post your own expenses?

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again for the Acting Premier: In the Premier's video confessional he promises, "We're going to say no under the rules to certain expenses." But Ontario families still can't see what you've said no to, and here's why: Eleven ministers and 19 agencies haven't posted their expenses for the past year on the government's expense disclosure website.

Now the McGuinty Liberals say they're going to fine hospital CEOs that lobby the government. What is the point of bringing in new rules if the McGuinty Liberals continue not to follow the existing rules?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm sure the member opposite is aware that her leader has not posted his expenses, and that is very regrettable. The member opposite knows the ministers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Community and Social Services will

please come to order, and the Minister of Research and Innovation. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean, you've just asked the question and you still have a couple of supplementaries yet.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are inconsistencies in the questions and in the facts. I know that Ontario taxpayers take those kinds of things into account. What's important is that Premier McGuinty and his government have brought much greater accountability across every range.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew should be in his seat.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't; somebody else is.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not my responsibility. We've dealt with that issue once before in this House.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario do understand the importance of the legislation that my colleague is bringing forward to further enhance accountability. We look forward to the debate. We hope the official opposition will support enhanced accountability—something this government has worked hard to provide the people of Ontario for the last seven years.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think there's something very important that the minister needs to know. First of all, he misled this House by saying the leader has not posted his expenses—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member will withdraw the comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw the comment.

Having said that, this minister must correct the record. Our leader's expenses were posted minutes after the Integrity Commissioner reviewed them. They're at ontariopleader.ca. But the reality is, we put forward the Truth in Government Act, which would have led to more transparency and accountability, but that party defeated it.

The auditor confirms what Ontario families already know: The Premier's so-called new rules haven't changed a thing. On page 8 of the auditor's hospital report, he says that the July 2009 directive you brought in to fix the loopholes at eHealth and the feeding frenzy were ineffective. Higher-priced consultants were given preferred treatment.

If you ignored the rules to fix eHealth, then why would you expect Ontario families to believe you're going to fix anything this time around?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, in the interests of accuracy, the member is aware and knows full well that all agencies have submitted their expenses by the deadline. The approvals are with the Integrity Commissioner, who is doing a great job at reviewing these expenses, which will be posted, as I understand it in our conversations with the Integrity Commissioner, when the Integrity Commissioner—and I should point out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm warning the member from Halton, and I'm warning the member from Renfrew.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That is part of the entire accountability and transparency that we have brought to government since assuming office seven years ago.

We'll have a chance later, in the supplementary, to talk about things that weren't brought to the public's attention in the past. But all agencies are in compliance. The Integrity Commissioner is reviewing them. We've brought integrity and accountability. I hope that member and her party will support the minister's legislation later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What I didn't hear was an apology to Tim Hudak, the PC leader, for erroneously telling legislators and the province what he—so falsely accused—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the honourable member that we have a practice in here of not naming individual names. Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Look, in the Premier's video of confessional, he sheds a few crocodile tears, and he says, again, he'll change.

But after the camera is turned off, he doesn't deliver the accountability that he promises Ontario families. Ontario families don't want more PR schemes from the McGuinty government; they want accountability. Instead of a Premier who rewards insiders, Ontario families want someone who will focus on front-line care first. Why can't the McGuinty Liberals understand that it is time for a change?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member is absolutely right that people want more accountability. Then why didn't her government put Hydro One under the auspices of the Auditor General? Why didn't you and your party and leader put OPG under the auspices? Do you think it had anything to do with the yachts and the consultants and the hidden expenses? Whatever became of the Hydro One yacht? And why did you not put hospitals under the auspices of the Auditor General? We're doing that. That government concealed its expenses, that party never wanted accountability when it was in office, and out of convenience and trying to get votes they try to undermine—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Lanark will withdraw a comment that I heard.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. For families watching local health services van-

ish, today's report by the Auditor General was a slap in the face. It is a damning indictment of how well-connected insiders made off with thousands and sometimes millions of dollars at the same time as families in Niagara and Hamilton were losing emergency rooms. Why is there public money for this government's friends and insiders, but when it comes to local front-line care, they say, "Too bad, so sad"?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The auditor, at our request, went in to look at the use of consultants in hospitals, in LHINs and the ministries. That is correct. At our request, the Auditor General went in. The Auditor General found practices that have been going on for a long period of time that are simply unacceptable. That is why we are taking action today to put an end to the practices. No longer will taxpayer dollars be used to hire lobbyists to lobby for more taxpayer dollars. That practice will immediately be put to an end. We are also expanding freedom of information to cover hospitals.

This is in step with steps we have taken, since we were elected in 2003, to increase transparency and accountability across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here is just one of many egregious examples of where our precious health dollars have gone: A consultant already being paid \$275,000 a year billed a hospital for \$2,100 for accommodations in Singapore and then another \$355 for drinks at dinner. Meanwhile, breast cancer patients in London were told that nurse examiners that they rely on would be laid off. If this government can't find money to support women dealing with breast cancer, why can they spend \$2,500 to send consultants to Singapore and buy them drinks?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party references one of the most egregious examples in the report. It is unacceptable to her. It is unacceptable to all of us.

Let's just remind that we are the ones who, contrary to the other governments when they were in power, gave the Auditor General the authority to go in. We knew when we did that that the Auditor General would find things that needed fixing. He has not disappointed us. He has found significant practices that we need to put an end to. That is why we are introducing legislation this afternoon: because this is all about getting the best value for taxpayer dollars. It is the taxpayers who are funding this. They expect that money to be spent on front-line health care. That is why we are making the changes that we're making today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Members will please come to order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While patients were being told that there was no ER service, consultants were being told that there are no limits. One hospital paid a consultant \$170,000 for two years of expenses, but when auditors

asked for the receipts for those expenses the consultant wanted another \$3,000 just to produce the receipts.

In Sudbury and Thunder Bay, emergency room patients are being admitted to hallways, to closets, to shower rooms. Why are patients waiting for ER services in a closet while consultants are charging \$3,000 simply to write a receipt?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, the leader of the third party has raised issues that the auditor has revealed in his report today. We are absolutely committed to improving health care in this province—and we've come a long way. We've got almost a million more people with access to primary care. We brought down wait times dramatically for surgeries and for procedures, in some cases by more than a year. We've got more than 10,000 more nurses working in Ontario today than when we took office. We have 2,900 more physicians working today than when we took office.

Our health care system is getting stronger. It is getting better. But it is clear today that we need to take steps to further strengthen accountability and transparency in the health care sector, and we are taking that action.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. Across Ontario, people are watching their hospitals cut services left, right and centre. In Windsor, patients lost their pain clinic, nurses lost jobs and surgical beds vanished.

Meanwhile, contracts to consultants were being handed out like Halloween candy. One hospital hired a consultant at a cost of \$163,000, and the firm got six untendered follow-up contracts worth another \$1.1 million. Another contract grew magically from \$51,000 to \$675,000.

Why are patients in Windsor losing surgical beds while consultants are watching contracts grow and grow and grow without any oversight by this government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, the Auditor General has been very, very clear that we've got some work to do. We accept that responsibility and we are moving on that today. This afternoon, I will be introducing legislation. If that legislation passes, we will tighten up the rules and enhance accountability and transparency in the health care sector and well beyond the health care sector.

This is just the latest in a series of steps we have taken to increase and improve transparency and accountability. Think back to 2003, when we were told by the previous government that there was no deficit in the province of Ontario. That will never happen again because we have given the Auditor General the responsibility of signing off on our books before the election. That was the first step we took. We've expanded—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hospitals in Ottawa have slashed nearly 100 nursing positions. This summer, one

woman arrived at her hospital rape crisis centre looking for help, and she was turned away because supposedly the hospital is in tough times—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm warning the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The woman was turned away from a rape crisis centre. Why? Because supposedly the hospital was in tough economic times and they had to cut some services. Today that woman is going to hear about a hospital consultant collecting \$210,000 for a four-day workweek.

What does this government have to say to that woman and thousands like her who are dealing with health care cuts while hospitals hand millions and millions of scarce and precious health care dollars to well-connected insiders?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What that woman is going to hear, and what people across the province are going to hear, is that that is not acceptable, that the practices of the past are no longer acceptable. I have spoken to the hospital CEOs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are making the changes that the Auditor General has recommended and we are going far beyond that. I do hope that all parties in the House support this legislation that will take us to a higher level of transparency and accountability.

But I simply must take issue with the premise of the leader of the third party's question that health care services are getting worse in this province. They are significantly better. Let me tell you how. In your own community, in Hamilton, we have reduced wait times at Hamilton Health Sciences for hip replacement surgery; we've taken 277 days off that wait. We have taken—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has been in power for seven long years in Ontario, and for seven long years they have watched as well-connected insiders have billed our hospitals more and more. For what? For trips to Singapore, for writing receipts for expenses, for six- and seven-figure salaries. They ignored patients who desperately needed investments in emergency rooms and in front-line care.

This government can't solve the problem. They are the problem. Why would any patient at all in Ontario believe that the government today can actually solve this problem when they have no solutions to the mess and everybody in here knows it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I take issue with the premise of the question. We know what the problem is because we gave the Auditor General the responsibility to go in and look. We specifically asked him to look at

the issue of consultants in this province. He was asked to go in; he went in. He did a very thorough job. He has come back with recommendations. We are going to implement every single one of his recommendations and we are doing it today.

This builds on a long history, a history since 2003, of improving accountability and transparency across government. We have expanded freedom of information to cover OPG, to cover Hydro One, to cover universities, to cover Cancer Care Ontario. Local public utilities were brought back under freedom of information in 2004. Today, we are adding to that list. We are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The question is for the Acting Premier. The last time that the auditor reported, Premier McGuinty reacted with PR schemes and bluster. In the PR video that he made before the auditor's report on the billion-dollar eHealth scandal, the Premier said, "Expenses for OPS senior management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies will be posted online." It is a year later and 85% of your agencies have yet to post any of their expenses online.

Why would Ontario families believe what the Premier is promising to do to stop Liberal-friendly consultants from getting rich this time around?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I responded to this question in a previous question.

My understanding is that these agencies have in fact submitted on time. Those expenses are with the Integrity Commissioner, who does an outstanding job in reviewing these. I imagine that that office is quite backlogged.

We're very proud of the fact that we brought this level of accountability and transparency to those expenses. I look forward to those expenses being posted and look forward to working with all parties in this Legislature to enhance accountability. And I look forward to that member supporting the Minister of Health's legislation later—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, it's his understanding, but the fact remains that 85% of his agencies haven't posted online. That's a fact.

The Premier made a second video apologizing for eHealth on September 14, but he's taken it down from his website. It could be to make room for a new video confessional about Liberal-friendly consultants getting rich off of hospital contracts.

But Ontario families have heard Premier McGuinty promise new rules before. Eleven of your cabinet ministers have not posted their expenses online since he said they would.

The Premier once said that the buck stops with him, but we all know it really stops with his press secretaries,

Jane Almeida, Michele Wong and Jennifer Beckermann, because it is through them where he buries his own expenses.

If the biggest scandal in Ontario history won't stop Premier McGuinty from skirting accountability and transparency rules, then why—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member, and I'd like her to withdraw the comments because it was appearing to me that you are imputing motive on the part of the Premier. I'd just ask you to withdraw that comment, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Acting Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Had the regulations we're putting in effect been put in by that government, we would have found out some really interesting things. We would have found out that former Premier Harris received almost \$20,000 in consulting fees from Hydro One. We would have found out that Paul Rhodes collected \$1,074,000 through contracts with Hydro One, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health and the LCBO. We would have found that Michael Gourley collected \$3.7 million in untendered contracts to provide advice on hydro privatization. We would have found a lot more.

We will be revealing that party's record of not providing transparency, not providing accountability, not respecting taxpayers, not respecting a brighter future for Ontario, not investing in health care, not investing in education.

Your record is dismal. Your arguments are pathetic. We're cleaning up—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I appreciate the comment from the honourable member who talked about the children who are sitting here watching this.

New question.

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier. Trust is at the core of care. You can't have quality care if you don't have trust. This government's actions have shaken the confidence of every Ontarian about our health care system. This government's actions have fostered this culture of entitlement to taxpayers' money, and the consequences of it are in the auditor's report for everyone to read. I must warn you, reading this report is hazardous to your health. It will make you sick.

How does the Acting Premier feel about his government having single-handedly destroyed a key pillar of our most cherished government program, our health care system? How does it feel?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I think the member opposite is misreading the report. What I mean by that is, I'm saying that the Auditor General has shone the light on practices that are completely unacceptable and do not reflect respect for taxpayers' dollars. We are changing that.

But what I do think the member opposite needs to understand is that it is part of what we have done in government, since we got elected, to continually improve transparency and accountability. There is nothing in this report that makes me—I am completely determined to clean up the problems that the Auditor General has raised.

We are taking action. We are taking action today. I am hoping that all parties in this House will support this legislation to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The government is blaming hospitals, but accepting no blame for themselves when Ontarians expect their taxpayers' dollars to go towards front-line care services, to build an excellent health care system for all. The minister claims there is no use for hospitals to hire consultants, yet it was this very government that fostered that culture where hospitals felt they had no choice, that there was no other way. If they wanted a result they had to pay for lobbyists, and that was the way business was done with this government. How can the government expect Ontarians to have faith in our health care system when we saw the eHealth scandal, and once again, we're seeing high-priced consultants living the high life—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will withdraw the comment he just made. Even over the noise I can still hear some of those things.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is simple: How can the government expect Ontarians to have faith in our health care system when, just like the eHealth scandal, once again we're seeing high-priced consultants living the high life while health care services suffer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do expect Ontarians to have faith in their health care system, and the reason they have faith and confidence in their health care system is that every year, health care is getting better in this province.

I was very pleased to recently announce 30 new family health teams across this province, bringing us to a total of 200 family health teams. That means better access to better care right across this province. The people of this province know that they are waiting less time to have key procedures done. We have more than 10,000 more nurses working in this province.

Health care is stronger and we are turning our attention now to quality of care. It is a concept that has been embraced by the health care community. I know that I

can speak on behalf of the health care community. We need to do better when it comes to transparency and accountability. We are doing better.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, my constituents rely on front-line health care services. Especially in these tough economic times, we know that every health care dollar should be spent to improve patient care. This government has made significant investments in our health care system. We have increased access to doctors and reduced wait times. We need to ensure we're getting the best quality and value for our money.

The practice of spending public dollars to hire lobbyists to lobby the government for more public money is something that has been going on for decades, by former governments of all parties. My constituents find this use of taxpayers' dollars totally inappropriate and would like to know if the minister believes this practice is acceptable or not.

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very glad to have the opportunity to speak to the issue. Let me be very clear: No one should be using taxpayer dollars to hire a lobbyist to ask for more taxpayer dollars.

This morning I spoke to the hospital CEOs and I put them on notice. Change is coming, and in fact, change is here. This afternoon, I intend to introduce legislation that, if it is passed, would ban the practice of using taxpayer dollars to hire a lobbyist to get more taxpayer dollars. This is a practice that has been in place for many, many years. It has been a practice under three different parties in power, but it is time for that practice to end.

In fact, during previous government years, over 150 lobbyists were hired on behalf of organizations that received public funds—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. I'm glad to see that this government is taking the necessary action to address this problem.

When it comes to accountability for public dollars, I know that the Auditor General released his report today raising concerns around the use of consultants. Ontarians expect their tax dollars to be properly invested in good government policies and services, and so do I. I know that our government needs to set a higher standard for everyone with more transparency, more scrutiny, more responsibility and more accountability.

Can the minister tell the House what you are doing to take action on this particular issue?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have made significant progress, since we were elected, in increasing accountability and transparency in government. One of the results of that is that we have cut in half the number of consultants that were working for government. That's right:

When this party opposite was in power, they were spending twice as much as we do on consultants.

This afternoon, I will be introducing legislation that, if passed, would authorize me to implement new accountability measures for hospitals and LHINs that would require the public posting of expense claim information. It would require reporting on the use of consultants. It would require attestations about each organization's compliance with the requirements of the proposed legislation. It would enforce potential reductions in compensation should executives fail to comply. It would permit ministry audits of the operations of LHINs and hospitals.

We're going even further. We are mandating public—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Acting Premier. I hope he has had a moment to regain his composure and catch his breath after the last one.

Ontario families will pay \$5 for KFC's double-down sandwich, and it looks like Ontario families will pay a lot more for Premier McGuinty's double downers. The auditor's eHealth report exposed a billion-dollar boondoggle of sweetheart deals being handed out to Liberal-friendly consultants. Now the auditor's hospital report exposes sweetheart deals being handed out to those same Liberal-friendly consultants.

Acting Premier, what makes you think Ontario families can afford it and you?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will simply reiterate what we have said from the beginning of question period. Bringing in increased accountability and transparency to government and to the broader public service has been at the core of the mandate of this government.

Later today, the Minister of Health will bring legislation to address the challenges raised by the auditor that have occurred under governments over the course of the last number of years. What we're doing is moving forward. I look forward to that member and his party supporting the enhanced accountability that the Minister of Health is bringing across the public and broader public sectors.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again, the McGuinty Liberals say that tough new rules are needed to stop them from handing out money to their Liberal-friendly consultants. They can't help themselves.

But he backtracked on the rules he introduced after eHealth. Premier McGuinty has backtracked so often, he has broken every record. Yesterday before lunch, the Minister of Health Promotion said KFC's double-down sandwich is something the McGuinty Liberals could investigate banning. A little later, after lunch, before the first unlucky bird could hit the fryer, the minister's office issued a statement backtracking on the double-down ban. How long will it take for Premier McGuinty to break the

record of backtracking on his so-called new accountability rules?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: If the kind of accountability rules we're putting in place had been in place some time ago, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't have expensed \$12.25 for his fishing licence, or perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would not have expensed \$575 for a television. To the point about fast food, perhaps the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't have expensed his chicken McNuggets on his taxpayer-paid trip to Rio de Janeiro 10 years ago. Then, to add insult to injury, the Leader of the Opposition expensed his most recent order of chicken McNuggets. At least he's consistent.

We are bringing openness, accountability and transparency that will prevent the kind of abuse of public tax dollars that happened when that member's party was in office to give—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I'd say to the honourable members that with all this talk of food right now and with the clock delayed, your lunch may be a little late today.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Acting Premier. As of November 1 this year, the winter time-of-use rates are going to be put in place. We know that electricity rates will double between 5 and 11 at night and 7 and 11 in the morning. The government is asking people to shift their habits so that they do things off peak, presumably between 11 at night and 7 in the morning. My question to you is, when do you expect students to do their homework—after 11 o'clock at night?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've talked many times about the importance of time of use and how it's going to encourage people to move off of peak. As we move into the winter months, nothing has changed, and we will continue those efforts.

I guess what I want to talk about a little bit today, as well, is why the third party continues to oppose our efforts to make the important investments in our energy system. Let's focus on job creation. Our Premier was in Guelph yesterday, where he announced that 380 direct and indirect jobs were being created. This is what the steelworkers of Ontario said:

"Today's announcement is doubly good news.... More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need, and helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids too....

"From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels"—I could go on, and I think I will in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, what students would like to know is, when are they going to do their homework? You're going to double the electricity rates from 5 in the

afternoon to 11 o'clock at night and you're going to double the rate from 7 in the morning to 11 in the morning, at the time kids are home. Heating has to happen, electricity has to go in, and the computer has to be plugged into the wall. So why don't you answer the question? Why don't you at least admit that your time-of-use survey does nothing to help students or families with their high hydro bills? When do you expect them to study?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have answered the question; I've answered it many times. But I think what those students also want to know is why the NDP is abandoning our efforts to create clean energy jobs in this province. And, frankly, I think that the steelworkers of Ontario would want to know the same thing, so I'm going to quote once again from the national director of the United Steelworkers, Ken Neumann:

"Today's announcement is doubly good news. More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need, and helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids too...."

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He goes on to say: "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy.... Workers in other countries know this is the economy of tomorrow.... More Ontario workers know clean energy will power our economy too."

Why don't the NDP know that? Why don't the NDP stand up for the steelworkers across this province? Why don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Communities in the Barrie and Simcoe area face unique challenges when it comes to growth, unique challenges that this government faced head-on with the release last spring of Simcoe Area: A Strategic Vision for Growth.

My constituents recognize the need to protect agricultural lands and green spaces in the Simcoe area. Yet although the Simcoe strategy was released for public consultation more than a year ago, the government still hasn't followed up with the draft amendment to the growth plan. There is a real sense in my community that the wait has been long enough and that it is time for the government to move forward.

Can the minister advise if he is considering a growth plan amendment for the Simcoe area, and, if so, when will he be ready to release it?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First off, I'd like to thank the member for Barrie for her advocacy on this issue. I appreciate this opportunity to answer her questions publicly. I'd like her constituents to know that she has been constantly in touch with me and my staff on this matter.

In answer to the question, yes, we'll be moving forward with a consultation on a proposed amendment to the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe, just as our Simcoe vision to promote strong and sustainable communities across the Simcoe region anticipated.

We very carefully reviewed the more than 100 submissions we received in response to our vision paper and used them to develop a draft amendment. We are currently finalizing the details, and I look forward to releasing it for public consultation very shortly, within a few weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: Thank you, Minister. I know that my constituents will be pleased to hear that the draft amendment is on the way.

I'm glad that more Ontarians are discovering Simcoe county and moving to the region to enjoy our unique quality of life and our strong sense of community. Continued growth is vital for our economic development.

Simcoe county has a proud agricultural heritage that we need to promote and ecological treasures that we need to protect. How will the minister's proposed amendment balance these competing priorities, and what will the proposed amendment seek to accomplish in terms of growth in Simcoe county?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In vibrant communities, balancing growth with the protection of agricultural lands and natural areas is what our award-winning growth plan is all about.

The overarching goals of the amendment we intend to release shortly for consultation will be to help all Simcoe area communities flourish by focusing growth in areas where it can be best accommodated and by reducing development pressure on natural areas and agricultural land.

It will enhance the area's economic competitiveness and encourage efficient use of new and existing infrastructure, and it will complement and support the Lake Simcoe protection plan and the greenbelt plan.

In sum, our proposed amendment will provide communities in the Simcoe area with the framework to achieve livable, compact communities and a clean, healthy environment.

HOME CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: My constituent Mrs. Marion Avard is 87 years old. She chose to convalesce at home rather than accept her doctor's advice that she stay in hospital for a month and in a convalescent care facility for another three months. By doing so, she and her family saved the health care system literally hundreds of thousands of dollars.

But when the family asked to be reimbursed for a mere \$500 for the cost of renting equipment such as a hospital bed and a wheelchair, they were advised by the CCAC that equipment rental is only covered for 28 days.

Can the minister tell us how this policy squares with her recent announcement of an expansion of the aging-at-home policy of this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question, and I think it's a very good question. We are very much putting our focus on improving the array of services that are available outside of institutions, be they hospitals or long-term-care homes. That community care is the future of our health care system. We simply must better support people to age at home, to convalesce at home and to recover at home. We are, I can tell you, looking very closely at what we need to do to further strengthen supports for people in their own homes. I will undertake to keep this in mind as we move forward to strengthen supports for people outside of hospitals and outside of long-term-care homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: This is a practical example of how disconnected this government is, from its announcements and professions to its practical delivery of policy. I appreciate the minister's undertaking and I look forward to seeing what will happen on this particular file.

It's interesting that on the same day that I got the advice of the decline of the coverage of this benefit, I received an announcement from the Central LHIN that it is expanding its bureaucracy by an additional two senior staff. I would ask the minister: Why on the one hand is there no money to pay an 87-year-old for a \$500 rental fee, but there are thousands of dollars to increase the bureaucracy at the local LHIN?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier, this area of supporting people in their community is exactly the direction that our government is going in. There are others who say the solution is to just build more long-term-care homes. Our solution is, let's really invest where it can make a difference for people: in their homes and in their communities.

Aging at home is undertaking that work through the LHINs for the first time. We are focusing on integrating that care and providing supports for people.

The Central LHIN—the member opposite's riding is in the Central LHIN—has got projects, for example, that provide housecleaning services to vulnerable low-income seniors in Markham, in Richmond Hill and in North York, helping people stay at home longer. They have a program that provides caregivers to individuals from east Asia who are suffering from dementia. The program provides access to personal support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. The Auditor General found that eight hospitals blew more than \$1.1 million of our precious health care dollars on lobbyists in the past three years alone. One particular hospital squandered \$675,000 on lobbyists over the past eight years. Why are the McGuinty Liberals only responding now, when high-priced, wasteful lobbying of their government has been going on since they were first elected, seven long years ago?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we've discussed throughout this question period today, we have taken several steps and today we are taking an additional step to improve transparency and accountability.

I think if members of this House from all parties were being honest with themselves, they would know that every party, for the past many, many years, has participated in lobbyists. This is a practice that has gone on for too long. That is why today we are banning that practice. If the legislation passes, we will be banning that practice.

I have spoken to hospital CEOs and board chairs today, and I've made it very, very clear that this is a practice that has to stop immediately; that it not wait until legislation is passed. I have also instructed people in my ministry that this is no longer a practice that is acceptable to us, because we do need—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General found that one hospital recently—recently—hired two lobbyists to get their issues on this government's agenda. Another had a \$50,000 deal with a lobbyist without any documentation whatsoever. How can the health minister claim to be surprised by these findings when the Auditor General has shown that well-connected lobbyists have been lining their pockets with public health care dollars in this province for years and years under this government's watch?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me go back: Ours was the government that brought in the power for the Auditor General to look at hospitals. That did not happen when the NDP was in power; it did not happen when the Conservative Party was in power. We were the ones who said, through the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, "Auditor, please go in and take a look and give us some advice." We asked for this advice. We asked for these recommendations.

And today, the day of the release of the Auditor General's report, I will be introducing legislation that not only responds to all of the recommendations in the report, but goes much further. This is another step in the right direction.

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IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. On October 15, I was proud to be in attendance as the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation held a remembering, honouring and thanking gathering to announce the start of their healing process and to unveil a monument in honour of Dudley George.

I took my eight-year-old grandson Martin and we started early in the morning with the traditional sunrise ceremony in one of the teepees at the former Ipperwash park. Martin learned that it took many years to bring about the Ipperwash inquiry so that we could discover the truth of what happened that tragic night. He had an opportunity to meet Justice Sidney Linden, who released the Ipperwash inquiry report in May 2007.

I know that the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is currently working with other ministries affected by that report's recommendations. Minister, how is this government taking action on the recommendations of the Ipperwash report?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It was a very emotional day and a very emotional ceremony last Friday at the unveiling of the Dudley George memorial. That day came about as a result of a terrible tragedy. The Ipperwash recommendations that my colleague references came about as a result of an inquiry—an inquiry that took a number of years to call, an inquiry which recognized that the heart of healing begins with understanding what actually happened and facing the reality of what actually happened. Everybody at that day, everybody at the ceremony recognized that that very painful recognition began with confronting the truth about what happened. That was the heart and the beginning of the ceremony, and I'll address some of the other matters in the supplementary.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know that we are well on our way to implementing many of the recommendations in the Ipperwash report, with many provincial ministries working directly with First Nations and Métis people of Ontario to review and implement those recommendations.

The agreement to transfer the Ipperwash park lands to the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation is an important example of this. My constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex know that our government committed to transferring Ipperwash park, even though it was not one of the 100 recommendations in the report.

The process started with the signing of the transfer process agreement by the former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the chief of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, Liz Cloud. Can the minister tell my constituents more about this process?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: What her constituents and the members of this House will want to know is that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has been chair of a working committee that brings together the First Nations and the surrounding communities for healing, recognition of joint opportunities, and how to move from those events—not forgetting, but remembering—into a very positive future. It's a result of her very hard work and the work of all those others that my predecessor was able to make the signing ceremony that committed the government of Ontario to transfer the park, and the ongoing work at identifying a better economic future for the First Nations and for the surrounding communities as a result of an inquiry that would never have been called but for the Premier and my colleague Minister Phillips's dogged determination—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The federal-provincial agreement

dated March 2, 2007, and signed by the member from Vaughan in his capacity as finance minister, obliged the federal government to complete several transportation projects with respect to the Flow initiative in the GTA.

Similarly, the agreement obliged the provincial government to complete several projects, and I quote from the agreement: "As part of the Flow and directly related to the commitment of federal participation in the above GTA transit project, Ontario agrees to complete the construction of three important highway projects to improve traffic flow in the GTA within firm and accelerated timelines." One project was the extension of Highway 407 to Highway 35/115.

This agreement is crystal clear, Minister. Why are you choosing to renege on it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not. We are going ahead with the extension of the 407.

I think the member opposite, who has access to a lot of information on this file, understands that the first 407 was built in stages. This part of the 407 is being built in stages. We're moving ahead right now, and we're moving ahead despite the fact that we had an economic downturn that was not envisioned when that agreement was signed. In spite of that, we're going ahead. The 407's next stage is in the works right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A couple of things here: One is, there was a firm commitment to complete this highway to 35/115; and secondly, despite the economic downturn, somehow the federal government managed to live up to their requirements.

Last night, I attended a public meeting in my riding, specifically, in the hamlet of Columbus. Your decision to renege on the Flow agreement is having a catastrophic effect on this community. You're proposing now to stop Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, right in the middle of Columbus. This makes no economic sense, no sense from a traffic perspective and, most importantly, it's going to totally destroy the social fabric of this important historic community.

Minister, at the very least, will you please revisit this ill-considered decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to challenge the member opposite on the contention that we're not living up to the agreement. We're going ahead with the Highway 404 extension, we're widening Highway 7 and we are extending the 407 to 35/115—but we're doing it in stages, which is a responsible approach to extending this road.

On the exit, which is the Simcoe road, we're meeting with the mayors of the area. I have had many conversations with Roger Anderson and with other political leaders. I know that there are issues around traffic circulation, and we will be dealing with those with the community.

But I remind the House again that we're going ahead. We are purchasing properties between Simcoe road and 35/115. We are committed to that entire area. The environmental assessment has been completed on the entire

corridor. We're building it in stages and we're going ahead despite an economic downturn that no one anticipated.

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The orgy of extravagant, high-flying spending on exotic trips, gourmet meals and alcohol for consultants paid for by our hospitals is absolutely disgusting. Reading it made me sick. This information would have never seen the light of day if I had not moved the motion in public accounts calling on the Auditor General to do this work. Liberal backbenchers in committee—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Members will please come to order. The Minister of Agriculture will come to order. The Minister of Finance.

Member from Nickel Belt, please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let me tell you that Liberal backbenchers on that committee tried to derail my motion, but they were embarrassed into voting for it in the midst of the eHealth scandal.

My question, Minister: How could you allow this disgusting waste of precious health care dollars to occur under your watch?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: History is interesting. Let's just remember that it may well be that the member opposite introduced the motion, but that is a committee that does have a majority of Liberals on it. We did ask the Auditor General to go in and find out what he found out.

I said earlier today that it's kind of like pulling the fridge out, you know? Certainly I think most of us have had the experience where you don't really want to pull that fridge out to see what's behind the fridge, but when you do, it's your responsibility to clean it up. So what we have done: We've given the Auditor General the power. We've asked him specifically to go in and look at these issues. He has reported back, and now our job, collectively, is to clean it up. I do ask the member opposite—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The auditor, in his report, makes reference to funnelling of money from the Ministry of Health through hospitals. We see agencies that were given close to a million dollars from the Ministry of Health to pay for two single-sourced consultant contracts to do work for the ministry. Last October, at the same time as I moved the motion that led to today's report, I put forward a second motion calling for the auditor to investigate this very practice. The Liberals on the committee voted it down.

With the minister's newfound love for transparency, can I suggest that she not only clean the fridge but clean the stove? Is the ministry ready to let the AG examine the compensation of senior executives?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do confess that I had a little bit of difficulty hearing the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I hope all members had the opportunity to hear the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It is important, when questions are being asked, that the minister to whom that question is being directed—so I hope that we can all learn a little lesson from the experience that the Minister of Health has just had.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

I will answer the question that I believe I heard, and the question is, will we end the practice of having the ministry pay through a third party? Yes, we will. That meant that practice is over. We do not do that anymore, and we will not do that in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended, and there being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning I introduced a class from St. Joseph Catholic School in Uxbridge, and I named a teacher, Kim Redmond. In fact, I met with the class, and it was Kate Evangelista. They were here, and they really appreciated meeting the Speaker and touring Queen's Park. Thank you, Speaker, for introducing them as well.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to introduce to the House a civically engaged constituent of Mississauga—Streetsville, Benita Grist, and her sister-in-law Linda Johnston. They are in the east members' gallery. I'd like members to welcome them to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: As you know, Monday, October 25, is election day in all municipalities across our province, so I rise today in the House to encourage eligible voters to exercise their vote in the upcoming elections. People will be making their choices for mayor, reeve, deputy reeve, deputy mayor, councillors and school board trustees.

Historically, a range of 17% to 35% of eligible voters vote in municipal elections. I think that this is very alarming, as it represents a very, very low turnout. I can assure you that every vote does make a difference and that everyone has a personal responsibility to exercise their democratic right.

The decisions made by local municipal councils have a huge impact on our day-to-day life. By taking the time to vote, we are ensuring that we're voicing our opinions on the visions in our municipalities for services like transit and garbage and police and fire and ambulance. Those are just to name a few.

Whether you decide to vote on October 25 or in one of the advance polls, I strongly encourage every eligible voter to take the time to make this important contribution as a citizen of our great nation.

CO-OP WEEK

Mrs. Liz Sandals: This week is national Co-op Week, and tonight is the Ontario Co-operative Association's 10th annual conference and awards gala. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the successes of co-ops throughout the province and to highlight the ways in which the McGuinty government is supporting the co-op sector in Ontario.

There are currently 1,300 incorporated co-ops, credit unions and caisses populaires operating in 1,900 locations in 400 communities across Ontario, serving more than 1.4 million members.

In terms of economic impact, the co-op sector in Ontario has more than \$30 billion in assets and employs more than 16,000 people. In Guelph alone, there are more than 40 co-operatives providing services such as housing and insurance, as well as dairy processors, credit unions and daycares.

Co-ops are owned and operated by their members to build sustainable communities by fostering local economic development. Recognizing the importance of the co-operative business model in Ontario, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has recently undertaken some initiatives to support the sector. There is now a ministry staff person dedicated to working with co-ops. A representative from the co-operative sector will have a seat on the Small Business Agency of Ontario and information about the co-op business model will be provided in ministry information and small business enterprise centres.

Congratulations to our co-operatives in Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to commend the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills for his efforts on behalf of the Nortel retirees. We should all support his request that the government's promised review of the thoughtful proposal of the Nortel retirees be open and transparent.

Since the very beginning, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills has been right to oppose the absolute requirement that Nortel pension plans be wound up into annuities, which would have meant hardship for many thousands of Ontarians. He raised this matter with the Minister of Finance in estimates some 15 months ago, he proposed an alternative in a private member's bill last year and this fall, when the finance minister said he opposed the Nortel retirees' proposal, Norm Sterling continued to ask questions during question period and estimates until the Premier finally agreed to review that decision.

My constituents are very grateful for his active support. Peter Welling, my constituent from Georgetown,

writes the following: "Norm Sterling has certainly done a great job. He has been relentless."

I agree. Nortel pensioners couldn't have a more effective MPP in their corner. This government must ensure its review is open and transparent. It must hear the concerns of Nortel retirees from across Ontario. They deserve nothing less.

Again, I want to thank and congratulate the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills for his work on this issue.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, which represents low- and modest-income Ontarians, have all written to the Premier and to the Minister of Energy demanding that the government review the flawed decision of the Ontario Energy Board.

This recent flawed decision will add \$240 million a year to the hydro bills of hydro consumers in Ontario. But as these three organizations point out in their submissions, this decision by the Ontario Energy Board to increase hydro bills by \$240 million a year has absolutely no evidence to support it. This is taking \$240 million out of the pockets of ordinary Ontarians who are already having a hard time paying the bill, and giving \$240 million to large corporations who are already doing very well, thank you. The refusal by the McGuinty government to review this flawed decision by the Ontario Energy Board shows once again that this is a government that doesn't care about the fact that people have a hard time paying their hydro bills.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: The world has just gone through—and some would say we're still in—the greatest recession since the Great Depression. It's estimated that roughly 30 million to 40 million jobs have been lost around the world.

In my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan and in the surrounding area we've had a series of good-news announcements. Lac des Iles mine recently reopened, calling back approximately 200 workers, and I'm told that there's the potential for further major investments there and that this site has years and years of production left in it.

1510

The Atikokan generating station will remain open and be converted to biomass, retaining jobs at the plant and leading to construction jobs for 200 to 300 people for a period of two to three years. The conversion may also lead to a new forestry-based biomass pellet industry in northwestern Ontario.

In Thunder Bay, Bombardier has hired back hundreds of staff and will be hiring a further 200 to 400 very soon. This plant is secure for years to come, in no small part

due to our government's investment of billions of dollars in mass transit.

The Terrace Bay mill has recently hired back 340 workers, and that's resulting in even more jobs in the woodlands.

Work building Thunder Bay's new provincially funded long-term-care home and new consolidated courthouse will begin soon. These projects have a combined value of approximately \$250 million. That's on top of unprecedented investments in roads, bridges and infrastructure.

As well, the northern Ontario heritage fund has been increased from \$60 million to \$100 million next year, creating more private sector jobs and drawing huge investment into northern Ontario.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Last night in the community of Columbus, there was a meeting about the 407 and the backtracking and failed promise of the McGuinty government to deliver on the 407.

I have with me a document which was signed by the member who was the Minister of Finance, Mr. Sorbara. He signed the 2007 document with Jim Flaherty and Lawrence Cannon, the federal minister. What he said on it was, "I completely agree." "I concur," he said.

What this is all about is the government's failure to live up to its promises. It's sort of like the eco tax and the electricity issue. All of the issues today—they say one thing and do completely the opposite. It's unacceptable behaviour.

The 2007 agreement was signed by Cannon, as I said, and Jim Flaherty. Greg Sorbara, in his letter, laid out to the minister the details of the Flow agreement between the federal and the provincial government for transportation in the GTA. As part of the agreement, the Ontario government was required to complete two highway projects: first, the widening of Highway 7 in Durham region, and second, the extension of the 407 from Brock Road to Highway 35/115.

At the end of the letter, Mr. Sorbara said, "I concur," in handwriting. It wasn't something typed in the letter. He had read the conditions and agreed. Now they are failing to keep their promise.

I don't want to relate it to everything else. The government has fully three ministers on record committing to the Highway 407 extension—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

LITTER

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise to support and to voice the concerns of my constituent Benita Grist.

Benita was inspired to act after driving in Mississauga and seeing a passenger in a car toss a disposable cup out of the car window. Since that day, Benita has been the driving force behind a grassroots anti-litter campaign.

During the past two years, she has been featured in Reader's Digest and the Mississauga News and has spoken before the region of Peel's waste management subcommittee, among others.

Benita uses her motto, "Litter affects all of us, even you," when she visits churches, mosques, synagogues and community centres to spread her message, citing the problems that arise from littering: an increase of pests; consumption of tax resources; property value decline; and a poor showing of places, particularly like historic Streetsville, to the hundreds and thousands of tourists that pass through our western Mississauga community each year.

Her simple request: Hold on to your garbage until you can dispose of it properly; secure recyclables on garbage day to avoid windblown debris; and pick up all litter you see, regardless of who dropped it.

Benita Grist saw a problem in our community and has a workable and constructive solution. Meadowvale, Lisgar and Streetsville offer her our congratulations and our thanks.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: A few short weeks ago, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Deb Matthews, announced the latest round of family health teams. These announcements bring the number of family health teams in Ontario to 200. This fulfills the government's commitment for this mandate.

Among the 30 new family health teams were two additional teams for Algoma-Manitoulin. Minister Matthews announced a family health team for Blind River and a family health team on the Batchewana First Nation at Rankin. She also announced a family health team for the city of Sault Ste. Marie, the Superior Family Health Team.

Family health teams are groups of doctors and/or other health care providers that can include nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians and others who provide primary health care.

This announcement will provide service to thousands of my constituents through the other eight family health teams we have in Algoma-Manitoulin at Manitouwadge, Wawa, Chapleau, Elliot Lake, Espanola, Little Current, Manitowaning and Mindemoya. When all 10 of these family health teams are fully operational, the vast majority of my constituents will receive their primary health care through family health teams.

On behalf of all those who have now or will soon have primary health care through the family health teams, I want to thank the Minister of Health and Premier McGuinty for their interest in rural northern health care, which this announcement demonstrates in a very tangible way.

HANA'S SUITCASE

Mr. Ted McMeekin: In late May 1944, a boy who had just turned 16 arrived in Auschwitz. He was still

there five months later when, on October 23, Hana arrived. She was 13.

The boy's name was Elie Wiesel, who, as you know, survived the Holocaust to become one of the most brilliant, compassionate and hope-filled writers our world has ever known.

In his book *Night*, Wiesel writes, "I decided to devote my life to telling the story because I felt that having survived I owe something to the dead, and anyone who does not remember betrays them again."

Hana did not survive Auschwitz. She was never able to write of her experiences. She was never able to realize her dream of becoming a teacher. Yet her moving story, told through the award-winning book and new film *Hana's Suitcase*, has become a very powerful teaching and learning tool, a vivid instrument to help us remember.

I want to thank two great Hamiltonians, Madeleine Levy and Marnie Flaherty, for their involvement in developing this wonderful education program. Madeleine and Marnie's efforts in the *Hana's Suitcase* project are a reminder that it is not only the survivors who have a duty to the dead; it is all of us who desire to live in a world where prejudice and hatred can find no soul in which to take root.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on unspent grants from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'll open the debate, and perhaps I'll adjourn the debate.

This report is one of nine reports which the public accounts committee produces each year on different sections of the auditor's report, which is usually released in December. This particular report deals with a section of his report of December 2009 on unspent grants.

This report focuses in on how the government, in the recent past, has flowed millions and even billions of dollars at the year-end—that is in the month of March, prior to the financial year-end—for activities that are taking place in future fiscal years. This was criticized by the auditor in two or three of his previous reports because normal accountability controls over these kinds of transfers are very difficult to implement.

The committee called forward the Ministry of Finance and came up with four different recommendations. Those recommendations included comments with regard to infrastructure funding, particularly stimulus spending infrastructure funding. It suggested that, in addition to what the finance minister is putting on his website, he should include, as the American government has in-

cluded in their stimulus spending infrastructure funds, the people who are receiving the contracts, the number of jobs created and the progress of that particular project.

1520

As well, so that the public know how their money is being spent and, in fact, there is some kind of accountability to it, the committee is recommending to the Ministry of Infrastructure that even though the stimulus infrastructure fund will be over in the very near future, that in the future, all projects exceeding \$25 million should be put on their website so that the public have a knowledge of what major projects are going ahead, who the contract is going to, what the nature of the project is and whether it's on budget or over budget. We would like to see what the finance minister has started with regard to the stimulus fund continue on to the future in normal infrastructure spending when we finish the stimulus plan.

As well, all members of the committee, all parties in the committee, are concerned about the March 31, 2011, deadline on the stimulus infrastructure program. Therefore, we are asking the minister to estimate how many projects would be affected if the federal and provincial funding lapse on that deadline. We think it's very important that that number get out early and perhaps can be used to encourage the federal government to extend that particular deadline. We also included another recommendation of a minor nature.

At this point, I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill Pr38, An Act respecting Big Bay Resort Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public

sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will make my statement during ministerial statements.

TONY WONG

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Tony Wong.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to pay tribute to Tony Wong, the MPP for the riding of Markham from 2003 to 2006.

Tony Wong was a man who was comfortable wearing many hats. He obtained his undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of San Diego and a master's degree in science from the University of Missouri. Not content to just work as a computer professional, Tony also obtained a law degree from the University of Toronto and had a successful legal career with his firm of Wong and Wong.

Throughout his life, Tony demonstrated a strong and enduring commitment to his community, a community I know well as I raised my kids in Thornhill, Markham, which I now represent in part. In 1996, he created Markham's Give-a-Gift Project, which provided more than 1,000 wrapped Christmas gifts to children in need.

Born in Hong Kong, Tony was dedicated to ensuring that the Chinese Canadian community received the assistance they needed to integrate and access language and social services. He was a founding director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic and acted as an adviser to a large number of community groups, including the Asian business networking group, the United Way of York Region and the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation.

In 1997, Tony took his commitment to public service to a different level and was elected to York regional council. He was elected again in 2000. It was during that time that his special interest in social services and housing shone through. While he served on a number of committees, he is perhaps best known for serving as chair of the Markham Task Force on Affordable Housing and the York Region Homelessness Task Force. Tony's dedication and commitment to housing issues was recognized at the ceremony on July 6 last year, when a 120-unit housing project sponsored by the Markham Interchurch Committee for Affordable Housing was named Tony Wong Place in his honour.

As York region chair Bill Fisch has noted, Tony Wong wanted to ensure that everyone had the right services. In

2003, Tony Wong ventured into provincial politics and was elected as the MPP for Markham. During the three years that Tony served as Markham's MPP, he served the people of Ontario in many capacities. While here at Queen's Park, he was the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and in the Ministry of Research and Innovation. But Tony was lured back to municipal politics and was re-elected to Markham council in 2006, where he continued to pursue his commitment to the residents of Markham. Throughout his time in public office, Tony was known for his quiet, steady and well-considered opinions, with a strong commitment to seeing a job done.

Despite his passing at the early age of 60, Tony Wong's list of accomplishments in business, in law and in public service underscore his strong passion for community service. To his wife Ellee and to his daughter Daphne, on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, we thank you for the life of Tony Wong. He was a leader and a role model in his community of Markham, in the Chinese Canadian community and, indeed, in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP caucus, to pay tribute to the memory of Tony Wong, a former colleague of many of us here today and a person I had the honour and pleasure of working with.

As members, we all understand the pressures of being a voice for our constituencies. We're here because we have taken on the responsibility and the privilege of navigating the mosaic of concerns and issues that come with a blending of thousands of distinct communities, cultures and experiences. But for some of us who have the honour to serve, these pressures are magnified by the simple fact that our presence here signifies more than our time-honoured duty of representing our official riding. Some of us are not only the elected representatives for a geographic constituency but take on the role of being a face and a voice for communities that span the width and breadth of our province.

Ontario has made incredible strides in valuing the strength of our diversity, but it's no secret that our elected bodies and our society as a whole still have quite a way to go in reflecting the mosaic that is our province. A simple look at the makeup of our chamber confronts us with the challenge that remains. Our colleagues who hail from one of our most underrepresented communities often have the doubly tough task of being the face and voice for people both within and far beyond the borders of their constituencies, a challenge that Tony capably and admirably embraced. Tony never shirked the responsibility of being a role model and advocate for both the riding of Markham and for Ontario's Chinese community. Whether it was here at Queen's Park or in his role on municipal council, he embraced the responsibility of sharing who he was, of doing his part to ensure that the diversity of our province remained one of its greatest strengths.

Although he was officially a public servant through his roles as an MPP and councillor, his life had long been

defined by public service before his name appeared on a ballot, and my colleague Peter Shurman made reference to a number of those contributions. In looking back at his accomplishments—and there are many—it's clear that Tony knew that compassion was the key to building a strong Ontario. Whether it was his earlier career as a lawyer, who took on pro bono cases to ensure that clients had representation regardless of the size of their bank account, or his Give-A-Gift program, which made sure Markham's underprivileged children also experienced the joy of Christmas, it was clear that he believed that caring only mattered if you are willing to do something to make a difference.

1530

Today, we have the privilege of being joined by Tony's wife, Ellee, his daughter, Daphne, and family friend Alex Yuan. On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus, I welcome you this afternoon.

Regardless of the side of the aisle a member sits on, we know that our success, both here and in our constituencies, is largely due to the support and sacrifices made by our families and our expanded network of family and friends that we depend on for support.

Today's tribute to Tony is equally applicable to those here with us and the many others who travelled with him on his journey. Thank you for sharing Tony with the people of Markham and the people of Ontario and for the investment of his time, energy and passion that was made possible by your generosity.

Tony's legacy as a leader, role model, mentor and cherished friend lives on in Markham and Ontario because he cared enough to make a difference. Thank you, Tony, for your commitment to making Ontario a better place for all.

Mr. Greg Sorbara: On behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House and the Premier, I too would like to rise and say a couple of words in memory of our colleague Tony Wong and to welcome his wife, Ellee, and his daughter, Daphne, to the Legislature in the gallery.

I'll never forget my first meeting with Tony Wong—our first sit-down meeting. I had a purpose in mind. My job was to try and convince him to leave municipal politics and join us in the Ontario Legislature. I was really, really impressed with this man. He represented the very best of what happens to people who come to this country to put new roots into this great soil.

He was born in Hong Kong, studied as a young man in the United States—San Diego and Missouri—and then came to Canada, not as a child but as a young man, got a law degree and began to practise law. What he brought to Canada was a very bright mind and a huge work ethic. He just knew how to work very, very hard. But what set him apart from others in that category is that he brought a very high degree of concern and commitment to the public good, and that wasn't just for the Chinese Canadian community but for the broader community.

He got a law degree and immediately became a founding director of an organization called the Metro

Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, and we've heard about his pro bono work.

Over the course of his life, of course, he served on numerous public service boards. It was not surprising that he ended up being urged to enter the political arena and in 1997 was elected as a regional councillor in the town of Markham and re-elected in 2000. In October 2003, we were able to get him on a Liberal ballot and he won in the riding of Markham, beating, by the way, a very popular, very effective, very well-known incumbent by the name of David Tsubouchi, a former colleague of ours here.

When I was recruiting him, I felt a little bit of reluctance. I think it was that he kept wondering, "What's the best way to serve my community?"

As I said, he won that riding handily, and he served in this Legislature diligently. One of the things I remember best back in that time of 2003 to 2007 was, we were having a debate, and we finally had a resolution of the way in which to best regulate traditional Chinese medicine, which is now well established in Ontario as a practice of medicine. It was Tony whom we asked to lead that debate and those issues and bring them to a resolution.

But do you know something? His heart remained in the town of Markham. So, in 2006—I think with some regret—he decided to resign his seat here and return to municipal politics, was on the ballot in 2006 and was re-elected to regional councillor in the town of Markham.

Sadly, in March 2009, he took ill, and within a few months, he passed away.

Physically—those of you who remember—he was a wisp of a man, but he had this enormous spirit and a huge and dedicated heart. I think Tony stands as a shining example of the Canadian immigrant experience: coming to this country and then dedicating oneself to making this country better and better. He did that, I think, as well as anyone who has travelled that route.

So to his wife, Ellee, his daughter Daphne and to all his friends, I say you can be justly proud of your husband, your father, your friend, because he made a terrific contribution. His life ended too early; 60 is very early, particularly for a man of such dedication. You can be justly proud of the work that he has done for his community, his province and his country, and I want to tell you, sir, and the family, that all of us in this House are justly proud of having served with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Wong and Daphne, please accept our deepest condolences on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We will ensure that a video of today's proceedings and copies of the Hansard are kept with you so that you can continue to be reminded of the memories and the services of Tony. Thank you very much.

VISITORS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was not here earlier today to introduce some very special guests of page captain Carina Hochgeschurz. Here today in the west members' gallery are her parents,

Colleen and Eric, and her sister Katelyn, as well as her aunt Linda Warren. Welcome to Queen's Park. You have a wonderful daughter.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSULTANTS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today I'm introducing legislation that, if passed, would raise the bar on accountability and transparency for hospitals, for LHINs and for broader public sector organizations.

Last year, we asked the Auditor General to look at the use of consultants and external lobbyists at hospitals and LHINs. He released his report earlier today. What he found, particularly in hospitals, is unacceptable and very disappointing.

I'm here to tell you that the government fully accepts the recommendations of the Auditor General. We are implementing each and every one of them; indeed, we are taking further action to set even higher standards. We are going further than he recommends. We need every dollar possible going toward front-line health care and delivering the public services that Ontario families rely on.

In his report, the Auditor General mentions that there have been improvements when it comes to procurement of consultants at the ministry and at LHINs, but it is clear that there is much more work to do. When it comes to the use of consultants at hospitals, the status quo is not working, so we're changing the rules—something that previous governments failed to do.

I think it's important to remember this government's record when it comes to increasing transparency and accountability, and let me give you examples. We have introduced strict new procurement rules for all ministries and agencies and are publicly reporting expenses. We expanded the powers of the Auditor General to review hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and crown corporations. We've added Cancer Care Ontario, universities, Hydro One, OPG and local public utilities to freedom-of-information requests. And today I'm introducing legislation to raise the bar and bring a higher level of accountability and transparency to public sector organizations.

1540

We are proposing to ban the practice of hiring external lobbyists with taxpayer dollars in hospitals, other large public sector organizations, and publicly funded organizations that receive more than \$10 million in government funds.

We're proposing to require large broader public sector organizations to follow tough expense and procurement rules.

We're proposing to require all hospitals and LHINs to report on their use of consultants and to post online the expense claim information for senior leadership.

We are proposing to require that all hospitals and LHINs sign attestations that they are in compliance with the new procurement requirements.

We are proposing to make hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act will continue to govern all files containing any type of personal health information. No identifying information would be released by hospitals through freedom-of-information requests.

Finally, if senior executives of hospitals or LHINs fail to comply with these tough new rules, their pay can be reduced.

These measures are necessary to protect the interests of taxpayers and to strengthen the government's accountability for the organizations it funds.

I have spoken with hospital and LHIN leadership and I have told them that the Auditor General's findings are unacceptable and that I am extremely disappointed. The bottom line is that this is all about respecting the people who are paying the bills. That's why I'm focused on getting the very best value for our health care investments. It's why we fought so hard to cut the price of generic drugs in half, and it's why we're raising the bar for accountability and transparency today.

As leaders, we have one goal: to ensure that we are doing everything we can to improve public services for all Ontarians.

I urge all members to support this proposed bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm happy to be speaking to the minister today on behalf of our leader, PC leader Tim Hudak, and our caucus.

The minister would know, because she does sit in this chamber, that had she voted along with her colleagues for the Ontario PCs' Truth in Government Act, a lot of the problems that the auditor talked about today would have been avoided.

This past May, this chamber voted on our bill that contained a series of taxpayer accountability and protection measures that would have expanded freedom of information across government. It would have ensured the disclosure of hospitality expenses, job reclassification and contracts, and contributions over \$10,000—on a government website.

The Ontario PC caucus, at that time, sought all-party support because we believed, and we still do, that it's a sensible plan that could be done at no cost, effectively and immediately.

The Liberals, at the time, not only whipped their vote; they actually had members like the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who stood up and said greater accountability is actually just added bureaucracy. The Liberals, at the time, continued to ridicule our efforts to create greater taxpayer protection in our government agencies.

Now, after major scandals like those at eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and this most recent scandal, where hospital dollars intended for front-line patient care have actually been used instead on Liberal lobbyists lobbying the Minister of Health, we have now seen a change of heart.

But let me tell you something: This is only a half-hearted change of heart. The Liberals have had seven years but only acted, as they always do, when they got caught with their hand in the cookie jar.

They opposed the Truth in Government Act that I personally brought forward, that could have caught many of the abuses cited in the auditor's report of today. This new legislation—let me say this—stops well short of what the Progressive Conservative caucus would have enacted last year.

This bill only opens hospitals to freedom of information, not all provincial public bodies. It only requires expenses to be disclosed at hospitals and LHINs, not all provincial public bodies. And it only requires reporting on consultants, and not all contracts for goods and services at all provincial public bodies.

So this stops well short of what we feel in the official opposition would be acceptable transparency and accountability measures. In addition to that, it is coming months too late. Again, this is a crowd that only acts once they've gotten their hand caught in the cookie jar. What's very offensive, and what my colleague from Nickel Belt would say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The implication of having your hand in the cookie jar is that some members of this House financially benefited by a transaction. That is not only wrong, it's insulting and shameful, so I would ask that the member opposite withdraw her comment, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I listened carefully. Certainly, we've had lots of discussions about impugning motive within this House, and it was not directed at any individual member. Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is characteristic that, of course, they would want to interrupt our speech while we're trying to hold them accountable yet again on something that they've done wrong, which is act too slowly.

My colleague from Nickel Belt this morning said that you've made us sick, based on this piece of legislation and based on this Auditor General's report. Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that this is an election year and they still haven't lived up to the commitments that they have promised to make on accountability.

These so-called reforms are only here because the Auditor General has yet again exposed this Liberal Party for what it is. Ontarians will have an opportunity to vote against them in the next election. My goodness, that Liberal Party had an opportunity in May to take a strong stand on accountability measures by voting for the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough will please come to order. I'm finding it difficult to hear the honourable member. They were courteous when the minister was speaking, and I would ask that the same courtesy be extended to the replies.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is that the Liberals don't want to hear from the MPP for Nepean–Carleton or any other Progressive Conservative MPP because we've been holding them accountable for their mismanagement, their neglect and their ill-advised schemes, whether it's at eHealth or Cancer Care Ontario or the OLG. The reality is, they should be ashamed of themselves.

When they had an opportunity to vote for strong accountability measures to protect taxpayers in this province, do you know what they did? They whipped their vote and voted against it. They don't stand on conviction. They stand once they've been caught not acting, and all they can do is blame someone else. Well, I can tell you something. On October 6, 2011, there will be one group of individuals blamed for mismanagement in this province by government, and it will be the Liberal Party of Ontario, led by the Premier of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Replies? The member from Nickel Belt.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Renfrew. We are now at an opportunity for the third party to reply to the statement from the minister. Let's all collectively have the courtesy to give the member from Nickel Belt the opportunity to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess it is my turn to respond to the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010. I want to place it in context a little bit. In response to the special report by the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, called Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is introducing this bill, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010.

Let's remember that the minister and her government, by their collective action, have shaken every Ontarian's confidence in our health care system. The minister should know the value of trust and confidence. Every health care provider in this province—in this country—knows that in order to be able to provide quality care, you need a relationship of trust to convince people to undergo painful treatment, to change the way they do things. You need trust; trust in your providers, trust in your agency and trust in your system. Without trust, you cannot have quality care. You cannot have the excellent health care system we want.

1550

Last year, after the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, released his special report on eHealth, the people of Ontario's confidence in our health care system got shaken up, not to mention their confidence in our government. The auditor put down on paper for all of us to see \$1 billion spent on eHealth with very little to show

for it. He showed us top bureaucrats being paid out of hospital budgets to circumvent provincial rules and regulations; that was done by our government. He showed us expense accounts that were so out of this world it was hard to believe that it was happening right here in Ontario, and he also showed us untendered consulting contracts that were so lucrative that every money-hungry Ontarian considered becoming a health care consultant. There was just so much easy money to be made. The list went on and on.

In the midst of eHealth I put forward a motion for the Auditor General to audit consultant use in the LHINs and hospitals. I'll read you the exact wording of my motion. It goes as follows: "I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts immediately request that the Auditor General conduct spot audits on the use of consultants by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the 14 LHINs, and Ontario's hospitals."

After a little bit of an attempt to have it derailed, it actually passed. Our Auditor General went to work and we have this report.

Here we have once again a special report of the Auditor General, and what you will read in this is disgusting. The report reads like an orgy of extravagant high-flying spending on everything from exotic trips to gourmet meals to alcohol, all on the taxpayers' dime. It actually made me sick to read the details, that taxpayers' money can be used that way. No wonder people in Ontario have lost trust. This government has single-handedly destroyed one of the pillars of the most important and cherished programs of this government: our public health care system. It is a real shame. If the destruction of our health care system does not ring a five-alarm bell, then what will?

So what does the government do in response? We get this bill, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It sounds even worse in French: la Loi de 2010 sur la responsabilisation du secteur parapublic.

What is in this bill? Well, this bill is a quickly-put-together series of half measures that will not give Ontarians what they want: the assurance that hospitals will not spend money on lobbyists. The minister said it herself: The bill will not give Ontarians the assurance that hospitals will not spend money on lobbyists. After the bill passes, hospitals will still be able to spend money on lobbyists. What does she answer to this? We won't answer the phone if the lobbyist calls.

Well, we will have to trust her, but you see, if we have this issue of trust after seven long years, we can't trust them to solve the problem. They are the problem.

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under certain conditions ... ; and

"Whereas since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care" services "in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Soumiya.

VETERANS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to read this petition on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas with turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II; and

"Whereas we also remember and honour our present-day veterans and all who have paid the ultimate price fighting for the freedoms we enjoy in this great nation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government declare November 11 a provincial holiday to honour our veterans of past and present; as well as all the soldiers of today who currently fight to defend our freedoms."

I agree with the petition and I will sign my signature to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a series of petitions on behalf of my constituents in Durham. These are primarily from people and families affected by community living. It reads as follows:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 80;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment" in the 2007 election "to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to" and including "2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the" Dalton McGuinty "government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector" in Durham.

I'm pleased to sign and support this, about lack of keeping commitments.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of London:

"Whereas a company's resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

"Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike" or a lockout.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with page Kieran.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, [despite] numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario province still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

1600

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency," more commonly known as CCSVI, "which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Soumiya.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Wellington-Halton Hills have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and community safety minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support this petition, affix my name to it, and send it down with Ffion.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to

agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

I sign this, as I am in complete agreement, and give it to page Bridget.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another series of petitions from my riding of Durham, and I thank people like Veronica McLachlan for participating. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which would mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for some of us in rural Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop further cuts to front-line health care, especially at our pharmacies now.

"By signing this petition, you are authorizing the coalition of CACDS, OPA and IPO to use the personal information you have provided to us"—this is just a declaration.

I support this petition on behalf of my constituents and present it to Haadiyah.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I certainly agree with this petition and will affix my signature.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the McGuinty government is pushing ahead with the installation of so-called smart meters and mandatory time-of-use billing by June 2011 despite the flaws with the program; and

"Whereas 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 doesn't give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, fix bugs with the software to run them, and to fix the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result; and

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, admitted that energy distributors 'may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation' of time of use, and said that these matters need to be addressed;

"Whereas relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready, isn't reliable and is making families pay too much on their hydro bills;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

I agree with the petition, and I will affix my signature.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a third petition today—a different one—and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care in its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature should call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal

shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection"—bifurcation, actually—"and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Harnameh, one of the new pages here.

1610

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINTE
GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to join the debate on Bill 110, the Good Government Act. This House has, as the minister pointed out on Monday, a history of this type of bill, which enables changes to legislation that do not justify individual pieces of legislation. I'll make some specific comments about changes to areas in my critic portfolio later, but I would first like to address the theme of reducing red tape and regulation, which bills like this are supposed to accomplish.

Let me first offer my congratulations to the Liberal government for its tremendous success in cutting red tape. Of course, I mean the Liberal government of British Columbia, led by Premier Gordon Campbell, which has cut more than 42% of that province's rules and regulations since 2001, a reduction that adds up to more than 151,000 needless regulations eliminated. If each regulation was represented by a single sheet of paper, it would make a pile 54 feet high. Contrast this record with that of Ontario's Liberals: They do not even know how many regulations we have in Ontario, much less have a plan to cut a significant number.

Now, to be fair to the government, the Liberals did announce a plan to cut regulations in 2009. They are very good at announcing plans for things that never happen or passing legislation to make a symbolic point without providing action. The Poverty Reduction Act and the "status of the artist" act are two good examples of this government's symbolic yet meaningless legislation. This, as I have referred on many occasions, is called gesture politics: You make an announcement as a gesture to some segment of the population or interest group so that you look like you care.

Their regulation-cutting announcement is another good example of gesture politics. On March 6, 2009, the then Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a 25% cut in Ontario regulations within two

years, i.e., less than five months from now. Does anyone in this House think that this government is anywhere near achieving this goal, particularly when they don't even know how many regulations Ontario has? The minister who made the announcement in March 2009 was Michael Bryant, so maybe he took the promise with him when he left politics.

I point this out not just because it demonstrates how little this government's promises are worth, but because cutting red tape for citizens and businesses is so vitally important to the economic health of our province.

A Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey found that 26% of new business owners would not have set up operation if they had known the red tape burden they would face beforehand. This is the number amongst current business owners, current members of the CFIB, and so you're left to wonder how many potential entrepreneurs didn't even set up a business after they found out the financial and the time burden of red tape.

I want to digress for a moment, because sometimes there's a bit of confusion about the question of interpreting reducing red tape as a matter of not reflecting important regulation. I want to just stop for a minute and remind members that regulation—we all agree that health and safety are, as two examples, the important areas for regulation, and they do a number of things, one of which is to create a level playing field for all of the businesses. They know the rules, they know that everyone else has to follow them and they know that there is a penalty attached to not following them. All of that builds consumer confidence, and it is the kind of business environment that people want to participate in.

What happens, then, is that government, and this government particularly, is imbued with the whole importance of layering and layering more regulation that now, we would agree, becomes red tape. It's overlap, it's duplication, it's onerous; it's why that 26% of the members of the CFIB would say that if they had known what they know now, they wouldn't have taken on their entrepreneurial responsibilities. So what has become onerous, with overlap and duplication, now encourages people to avoid. It diminishes consumer confidence, and the only part of the economy that grows is the underground economy. So I think it's really important for people to understand that everyone benefits when you have thoughtful, supportive regulation. No one but the underground economy grows when you have red tape.

My colleagues have outlined a number of our concerns about this legislation. To me, its chief fault lies not in its contents but its brevity. There is so much more that should have been included, so many other changes this government could have made over the last seven years that would have encouraged prosperity and assisted the creation of small businesses. Businesses will have to wait for a PC government to see any of these done.

Let's take a quick look at one section of the bill that has prompted criticism in the consumer services section. Proposed changes to the Travel Industry Act are raising concerns among the travel industry. Bruce Bishins,

president and chief executive officer of the Association of Retail Travel Agents, or ARTA, told my office that "neither of the two amendments to the act were discussed with registrants, and no public comment was solicited" by the government. I think that this is the kind of precedent that certainly doesn't bode well for any kind of industry where they're not consulted. Mr. Bishins told us that "as a matter of principle and fairness to stakeholders, these two amendments to the Travel Industry Act, 2002, should be refused until comments and discussions take place with travel agencies and travel wholesalers."

ARTA, the association, has had many problems with the practices of the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, or TICO, the arm's-length government agency that regulates their industry. Regarding the amendment to change the definition of "travel services," ARTA believes the following: "The proposed change appears to redefine 'travel services' so that non-transportation, non-accommodation travel product and service components are not included in the definition unless they are combined with transportation or accommodations. The term 'travel services' appears throughout the act and regulations, and impacts everything from fund contributions to claims. This change would create a significant amount of product/service categorization in each sale, which would be burdensome for the travel agent, confusing for the consumer (as to protection or not), and overall, in our opinion, reduces consumer protection."

1620

Retail travel agents are also concerned about the proposal to change the approval process for the requirement to file financial statements. I quote: "Removal of 'approval of the director' concentrates too much unchecked authority with the registrar."

"It is always wise to assure that the director (the statutory legal director) has approved an action of the registrar."

Repeatedly, through this act and the previous so-called Open for Business Act, the government is pushing responsibility for approvals down the bureaucratic chain.

Earlier in this debate, my colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke noted that the government is moving certain approvals from the cabinet level to the ministry level, eliminating full cabinet scrutiny. A number of presenters on this bill and its predecessor have noted the downgrading of approvals, from directors downwards in various ministries. Is the government not concerned about moving approvals down to less-expert levels of decision-making? Are they not concerned about accountability? It is ironic that a government that is so willing to shut down all appeals and debate on the peaker plant in my riding now wants to distance itself from so much of the ordinary day-to-day decision-making. Is this a deliberate strategy by the government to evade public responsibility for decisions or is it simply indifference to the decisions that are made? Either way, it is a failure of leadership.

I want to see it made easier for citizens and businesses to get decisions from government. I want unnecessary

approvals to be eliminated. But, equally important, approvals need to be made properly. Perhaps the only thing worse than red tape is government making a bad decision. This is becoming all too common, and the arm's-length agencies of government are one of the greatest offenders. The Travel Industry Council of Ontario is obviously raising the ire of many in the travel industry. I have also heard many complaints about the operation of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. These agencies need to be properly supervised by government, given clear direction and priorities. Unfortunately, we hear repeated examples where the McGuinty government is not maintaining a watch on these agencies. The government is simply not good at governing.

Regardless of a governing party's ideology, principles, plans or strategies, it has to know how to govern. You have to understand what is important and what needs to be done. Holding power for its own sake is not enough. Many of the scandals of this government—eHealth, the LHNs, the OLG, and the list goes on—are not the result of deliberate policies of the Liberal government, but an indifference to governing properly. We saw this with the new propane regulation. You introduced it without proper consultation, found it would not work, and now have to go back and rewrite it. The same thing for the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act: The government has pushed it through the House, but admitted in the committee hearings that it would be delayed for two years because more legislation has to be changed to put it into effect.

This bill is just another indication of this fault in the government. If they had understood what business needs or why red tape is a problem, they would have taken action seven years ago. That's what Gordon Campbell did and that's what a Tim Hudak government will do. We know that red tape stands in the way of our economic success. If people grant us the privilege of forming a government next year, we will take action to cut red tape and build prosperity for everyone in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened intently to my colleague from the Conservative Party. While as a New Democrat I would disagree with her on a number of the recipes that she has put forth, let me say this: I agree with her that this legislation is very thin gruel at best.

The government promotes this as legislation that's going to create jobs, that's going to put people back to work. I wonder if the government notices that another 27,000 Ontarians lost their jobs last month alone. This legislation and the promise of this legislation is going to do virtually nothing in terms of creating jobs in this province or in terms of restoring to employment people who now, unfortunately, find themselves unemployed.

If anything, this legislation—and I think the member correctly identifies this—is an attempt to paper over a very serious problem and a very serious jobs crisis in this province. I think it demonstrates once again how out of touch the McGuinty Liberal government is with what is

happening out there, how out of touch it is with the fact that literally hundreds of thousands of low- and modest-income families, for example, can't afford to pay their hydro bill and that seniors, for example, are having to choose between paying the rent, paying the hydro heating bill and putting food on the table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is part of a package of reforms that this government has been advancing in bills that are digestible and understandable. This removes 1,000 pages of regulation. This ranges from restaurant ventilation systems that would require almost the same environmental review as opening up a chemical plant right on through to the building trades and to the requirements of professionals and tradespeople. The entire content of this regulatory reform was driven by trade unionists, small business owners and regulated industries, and when I knock on doors in my constituency, I hear this.

I was in the member for Cambridge's constituency the other day and I heard about a business leader who talked about how this reform is saving that business \$45,000 a year. The HST is saving his business \$550,000 a year. He is adding four employees annually a year and keeping a data centre and 200 jobs in that constituency. He did not have to fill out a paper.

He's voting Conservative federally because the Conservative government not only supported this agenda; it also reduced the taxes on imports. He is perplexed at the incongruence and inconsistency and wonders whether the Conservative Party was really a Conservative Party because of its attack on this kind of reform in the House. He kept on asking, "Where are you people? Have you forgotten how long it is since any of you ran a business?"

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I thought that the purpose of these two-minute responses was to comment—in this case on the member from York-Simcoe—as opposed to pushing your own agenda. You'll have your time. I'm going to wait to see if the government members actually stand on Bill 110 and address the seven-section, 36-page red tape bill.

1630

The member from York-Simcoe, with her experience here, made a couple of very valid points, but more importantly, the overall general theme of what she said was that they're actually making government organizations and self-regulating functions less transparent. They're downloading this stuff to—general public servants can make decisions on licensing and various decisions. I think the member from York-Simcoe had it right.

I've heard other people say that they're suspicious of why they're trying to rush this through; I've heard that word used a few times. We know that if we can trust something that's being said, you have confidence in that they will actually do it. But the experience here is quite

the opposite, whether it's the eco tax—they announce it and then they withdraw it; or the smart meters—they announce it and then they start tinkering with it.

It's amazing to me that their record over the last two to three weeks has really been one of backtracking, of backing up and starting. There's no consistency or continuity. So I remain concerned and worried as to why this so-called red tape—what are they doing here? When you download responsibilities that used to be order-in-council appointments of people who had the authority to make certain decisions or interventions to people who are just members of the public sector workforce, anybody can do these things. That's simply trying to find the person who actually made the decision.

I can't support what I'm hearing. I want to hear some of the government members speak to this, but the member from York-Simcoe had it right, I believe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm happy to respond to the member from York-Simcoe. The Good Government Act is made up of approximately 70 items from seven different ministries. Most of the provisions would make technical changes to existing acts, but are necessary because they would improve clarity and keep the language of the laws current. Additionally, this bill would ensure that our legislation is up to date.

This bill is an essential housekeeping measure, but is no less important. This bill would build upon your government's Open for Business initiative. Since the McGuinty government came into office in 2003, we have demonstrated our commitment to working with business communities to address barriers to investment and growth. This bill, if passed, would further the Open for Business goals of decreased regulatory burden and better responsiveness to businesses, and, if passed, would improve the services provided to business and the public. That's an important issue.

This bill, if passed, would amend redundant or outdated provisions of the eight statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. In addition, if passed, the bill would provide additional clarity and update terminology in those statutes. No compromise in patient or public safety is anticipated. This is good government.

If passed, the proposed amendments and repeals would provide clarity to Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care legislation, contribute to a more streamlined regulatory framework for the health care sector, and contribute to the government's commitment to reduce regulatory burden. That's good government.

I have a bit of time left, but there are several issues just for one ministry that are going to be clarified by this. I do not understand why anyone would object to clarifying the laws, to make the changes that will make it easier for businesses and everyone to use the system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for York-Simcoe, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to the member from Kenora-Rainy River, the Minister of Research and Innovation, and the members for Durham and Ottawa-Orléans.

I have to give the same comment as the member from Kenora-Rainy River, that we won't always agree, but I certainly liked his definition of this bill as an attempt to paper over the jobs crisis.

It's interesting that the member from Ottawa-Orléans referred to this as part of the Open for Business process that the government has suddenly gone—it's like getting religion. They had to identify the last few pieces of legislation as Open for Business and this one as good government. It's taken them nearly eight years to figure out that that's why they're here.

The other issue that I think is most important is that when the members of the government talk about how much this does to streamline and so forth, I have to come back to those people that I know who are saying, "We were not consulted. This is going to make our job more difficult." It's no good if you haven't done your homework, and you have left people out in the cold, where they simply get the bill.

I can tell you that we have other members of the broader community who are coming to us to tell us about the lack of consultation and the lack of consideration they have experienced. The travel agents are simply one group of people who have been able to articulate particularly the effects that this will have.

I want to just remind members that this bill—people talk about how many schedules there are. Well, yes, it is a complicated bill. It just lacks substance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There having been six and one half hours of debate on this bill, the debate will be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader indicates otherwise.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: We would like the debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Yes, I'm glad you acknowledge that I'm the Speaker. Thank you very much, member for Durham.

The member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on this bill, but I have to say, in the context in which it occurs today, it is difficult to bite one's tongue. The government calls this bill the good government bill, and what we saw today from the auditor in the auditor's report is anything but good government. Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money that was supposed to go for front-line health care has been wasted on well-connected consultants and lobbyists who are oh, so cozy with the Liberal Party. By definition, that is not good government. Any government should be embarrassed by that. They should be ashamed of it, because it is not good government; it is the antithesis of good

government. So I find it interesting that I have an opportunity to speak on this bill today.

Now, the government says that this bill is going to create jobs and restore employment in Ontario. That's what the accompanying press releases say, that's what the government has said over and over again and I just heard a few government members say this once again here in the House. So I approach it from the perspective of people who live in my part of Ontario; I approach it from the perspective of people who live west of Sault Ste. Marie. As I read the bill, I tried to figure out, tried to see how this would do something to restore employment.

Again, let me set the context for you. When the McGuinty Liberals became the government of Ontario seven years ago, we had, in Sault Ste. Marie and west, 21 operating paper machines. We had three operating paper machines in Kenora eight years ago. We had two in Dryden, three in Fort Frances, eight in Thunder Bay, two in Red Rock and three in Sault Ste. Marie. After seven years of the McGuinty Liberals in government, we've gone from 21 operating paper machines in northwestern Ontario to three: two in my home town of Fort Frances and one in Thunder Bay. Eighteen have disappeared. Eighteen are gone, and with them thousands and thousands of good jobs for instrument mechanics, machinists, welders, millwrights, pipefitters, computer technicians; good skilled jobs that offered good pay and good benefits that a family could survive on; thousands of jobs gone.

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I look at this legislation and I say to myself, "Is there anything in this legislation that's going to do anything to remedy that, to restore some of those jobs?" I have to say that, sadly, there is nothing.

But what really rubs salt in the wounds of people who live in Sault Ste. Marie, Marathon, Red Rock, Nipigon, Thunder Bay, Dryden, Kenora or Fort Frances is that if they look to the east, to Quebec, there are more than 25 operating paper machines in that province. Yes, Quebec has lost some jobs, but an industry that has been almost totally destroyed in northwestern Ontario under this government continues to provide thousands of good jobs in the province of Quebec.

What rubs salt in people's wounds even more is this: If I look immediately to the south, if I go across the border to International Falls, Minnesota, the two paper machines are still operating, providing 500 good jobs for people. If I go down to Grand Rapids, Minnesota, only an hour and a half south, the two paper machines are still operating, providing over 500 good jobs for people. If I go to Duluth, Minnesota, the paper machines are still operating, providing hundreds of good jobs for people.

People in my part of the province look at it and say, "How can this be?" This industry is still operating immediately to the south in Minnesota, still providing good jobs. It's sustaining over 25 paper machines in Quebec, sustaining thousands of good jobs. Yet 18 paper machines have disappeared from northwestern Ontario and thousands of good jobs have been destroyed.

All people need do to check this out is go to the websites. Go to the website of Abitibi, and you'll see that

they have six operating paper mills in Quebec, for a total of almost 12 paper machines. Or go to the website of Domtar or the website of Tembec or the website of Kruger, and it's all there: how many machines are operating, how many workers are being employed. Will this legislation do anything about that? Nothing.

It goes beyond that, because the reality of that industry is that when you lose paper machines and you lose pulp mills, it also creates great economic difficulty for sawmills. For sawmills to operate, they have to be able to do two things: They have to be able to sell their lumber, and that wood fibre which cannot be turned into lumber, they have to be able to sell the chips to paper mills and to pulp mills so that it be made into paper and pulp. But if you lose 18 paper machines, suddenly there's nowhere to sell the chips. So literally dozens of sawmills have had to shut down too. The sawmill in Kenora is gone; the sawmill at Ear Falls is gone; Sioux Lookout, Dryden, Atikokan; three in Thunder Bay: Northern Hardwood, Great West Timber and Northern Wood; White River, Dubreuilville and Hornepayne—again, thousands of good jobs.

Is there anything in this legislation that is going to help restore some of those jobs? People who have worked for 25 or 30 years, people who have paid their taxes, people who have contributed to the community, people who have been responsible citizens, who have been, in many cases, the foundation of the community: Is there anything in this bill that is going to do anything for them? Nothing; nada; zero.

It goes beyond that, because not only do you have the jobs of the people working in the mills—the paper mill, the sawmill—but you have the hundreds of jobs—indeed, if you look across northwestern Ontario, the thousands of jobs—of people who would work in the forest, of people who would work in transportation, and of people who would work in mechanical services, keeping all of the equipment operating and maintained. Is there anything in this legislation that will do anything to restore those jobs? Nothing; not one wisp.

So I come back to what I said a bit earlier: There is a huge jobs crisis out there, an incredible jobs crisis. People who have worked all their lives, people who are worthy of respect from all of us, have been put out of work, are now struggling on what little employment insurance they may have left, are using up their life savings, have been forced to resort to Ontario Works, and this legislation is not going to do anything for those people.

What is this bill? What is it, really? Well, it is an attempt by this government to pretend that it's doing something about the jobs crisis. It's an attempt by this government to pretend to people that it cares about all those thousands of people who have been put out of work, an attempt by this government to paper over what is a serious crisis—and I would argue it is becoming more serious. Twenty-seven thousand more people lost their jobs in Ontario last month. The job losses that happened last month continue in the resource sector, the

manufacturing sector, areas of the economy which have continued to pay good wages, family-supporting wages, community-supporting wages. Again, this bill isn't going to do anything about that.

What should be in this bill? What should be here if this government were really serious about sustaining jobs, putting people back to work instead of pretending? Well, one thing which would go a long way would be a bill which requires that those municipalities across Ontario that need and should be investing in public transit—that that public transit, whether it be buses, whether it be streetcars, whether it be subway cars, must be sourced in Ontario. If we're going to spend the public's money, the taxpayers' money, then the people who pay the taxes, the workers of Ontario, should get some benefit from that. They should at least have a chance at a job from that. Is there anything in this legislation that will do that? No. Not one parcel, not one word, not one bit. There is nothing in this legislation that will do anything like that.

In my part of Ontario, if you talk to those people who used to work in paper mills, they will tell you that what put their paper mill out of work, what put their paper machine out of work, were skyrocketing industrial hydro rates; hydro rates which are now more than double what they are in Manitoba and Quebec for industrial operations. When did that explosion of hydro rates happen? Immediately following this government's passage and implementation of Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004.

What did people like Abitibi, Domtar, Xstrata AND Falconbridge say to this government in the Bill 100 hearings in 2004? They said, "If you implement this legislation, if you put this legislation in place, it will cause industrial hydro rates to skyrocket and you will destroy thousands and thousands of manufacturing and resource jobs." Does this legislation do anything to fix that problem which the McGuinty government created in 2004 with Bill 100? Does it do anything at all about it? No, it doesn't do anything to address that issue, to address that problem.

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Let me tell you what the net result has been for most of northwestern Ontario and indeed, I would also argue, for northern Ontario. What is now happening is this: We still harvest the wood fibre in the forests. We harvest it. Increasingly, we run it through about four or five pulp mills and semi-process it into pulp, then we ship the pulp to the United States where the pulp is then mixed with rather inferior wood fibre there to manufacture paper in the United States. What we've effectively done under the McGuinty government is literally export thousands of good, skilled jobs to paper mills and paper machines in the United States.

But it's not just in the forest sector that that's happening. We've witnessed, over the last few years, first of all, Vale Inco, now called Vale, close the copper refinery in Sudbury, and they were very clear when they closed it. They said, "We're closing the copper refinery because we cannot afford to operate this refinery with the escalat-

ing industrial hydro rates in Ontario." So Vale Inco closed the copper refinery in Sudbury. They still mine the copper in Sudbury—they mine it there—but they now ship the copper to Quebec to have it refined and processed there. Some 250 good jobs disappeared out of Sudbury. The resource is still taken out of the ground in Ontario, but it's shipped somewhere else to be refined.

The same episode has been repeated just this past year in Timmins. I remember when Falconbridge, now called Xstrata, came to the Bill 100 hearings and said, "Our metal refinery in Timmins is the largest single purchaser of industrial electricity in Ontario." And they said to this government, "If you implement this bill and drive industrial hydro rates through the roof, we will not be able to continue to operate our metal refinery in Timmins." Well, what happened last year? Xstrata announced that they're closing the metal refinery in Timmins. When you take the jobs inside the plant and the contracting jobs and the support jobs, it's 2,500 good jobs gone out the window. Xstrata is still going to mine the ore in Timmins—they're still going to take the ore out of the ground—but they're going to ship the ore to Quebec. It's going to be refined and processed there—another 2,500 jobs gone.

This government, in its press releases, likes to talk about progress, but what we've seen in northern Ontario is actually regress. Fewer and fewer of the resources that come out of the forest or out of the ground are actually being processed, refined and turned into anything valuable in Ontario. We're still taking the wood fibre; we're still taking the valuable ore out of the ground. But increasingly, under this government, what's happening in northern Ontario is that we're regressing. We're simply becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water. The resource is being shipped to other jurisdictions, and the good jobs are being shipped other jurisdictions.

I say again: Is there anything—anything—in this bill that is going to address that? I can tell you that I searched through the legislation, I searched through the schedules and I looked at proposed regulations. There's nothing. There is absolutely nothing in this bill that is going to address the jobs crisis this government has created in northern Ontario—absolutely nothing. Tens of thousands of good jobs have been destroyed; the economic foundation of whole communities, in some cases, has been destroyed, and there is absolutely nothing in this bill that is going to address that.

I think the public is catching on to this government. I think the public is catching on to a government that churns out press release after press release, photo op after photo op, but in fact hardly anything happens.

Just to go back to context: When this government was hauled over the coals by the auditor a year ago over the eHealth scandal, when the auditor said that this government had blown \$1 billion on eHealth, much of it going to well-connected consultants and lobbyists but virtually nothing of value was produced, the government was very quick to produce a press release saying that it was going to address the problem.

But now we have another auditor's report that says that not only was this government blowing \$1 billion out the door on the eHealth scandal, but it's been blowing millions of dollars of health care money out the door again, going to well-connected lobbyists and consultants who are ever-so-cozy with the Liberal Party of Ontario.

I look at this legislation, which does nothing to address the jobs crisis, and I'm embarrassed that this government can stand here and try to talk about good government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Perhaps people are watching this at home while they're preparing dinner, or maybe they're watching a rebroadcast of the legislative proceedings late at night, so I guess I'm going to say: Don't change the channel. In less than two minutes, I'm going to explain to you what we're talking about, and I'm going to tell you why.

Once or twice a year, governments of all stripes, at all levels, have a cleanup bill that modernizes existing laws and makes technical fixes to legislation from different ministries. It does other of these housekeeping tasks, very much like the spring or autumn cleaning that you do at home. What that means is that members can talk about nearly anything they want, hence the previous member's stemwinder on issues in his own region.

What's good for the opposition is also good for the government, so let's talk a little bit about openness and transparency, which has been one of our province's objectives since the election of our government.

In terms of our commitment to openness and transparency, let's just talk about some of the agencies and boards that were brought under what's called freedom of information and privacy, where you can now access the information that's stored about you:

- Cancer Care Ontario, in 2010;
- publicly funded universities, in 2006;
- Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, brought back under freedom of information in 2005, where the Conservatives had previously exempted them; and
- local public utilities, brought back in 2004.

The Audit Statute Law Amendment Act of 2004 broadened the powers of the Auditor General to review public sector organizations.

Our government implemented the Personal Health Information Protection Act in 2004, which establishes privacy protection for people's personal health information and allows Ontarians to access their personal health information.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am pleased to comment on the address by my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River.

But I first must comment on the response, or the comment, from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who, in typical Liberal fashion, promised to explain to the viewers out there in two minutes what this bill was all about and again failed to deliver.

However, back to my friend from Kenora–Rainy River: What my colleague talked about through much of his address—he spoke about the concern he feels for people throughout northern Ontario, many of them in his riding of Kenora–Rainy River. Essentially, the way I see it, he's asking this government—you feel that the priority of this Legislature is to bring in a bill called good government, which of course you self-titled, which is somewhat of a joke in itself, while there are people across this province struggling. In fact, they are just barely keeping their heads above water.

1700

Is the priority of this government to see if they can keep some of those mills that my colleague talked about open? Is the priority to see if they can open up some of those lumber markets so that some of these paper machines can start working? Is the priority of this government to have an energy policy that addresses the economics of energy? No. It seems to be, "Let's bring in a bill that we're going to call a bill about good government and hope that people think, 'Oh, this is wonderful. They're going to bring in a bill for good government.'" The only way we're going to get good government in Ontario is if there's a new party running it after the October election of 2011.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Kenora–Rainy River speaking for almost 20 minutes about many different things, except the essence of the bill. The bill talks about amendments to seven ministries to modernize so many different elements, to update them to fit and be able to be accessible and used by the people of Ontario.

I know the member spoke about many different elements which concern the people of Ontario: health, education and hydro.

I want to remind the member: Since we got elected in 2003 we've created more than 8,000 megawatts—we can say that proudly—and the majority of those megawatts come from renewable and green energy. When he was part of a government, he cancelled the contract with Manitoba. Otherwise, we wouldn't have had to invest a lot of money in many different elements—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've got it right here: 1,000 megawatts.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, 1,000 megawatts from Manitoba at a good price, cancelled. Why? I don't know. He knows the answer.

We continue to invest in education. We announced not a long time ago the biggest program ever in the history of the province of Ontario: kindergarten for 55,000 students across the province of Ontario, to allow them to have the best start ever, because we believe strongly that the only way we can progress in the future is by educating our people.

Investment in health care: Use the hospital system. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned it yesterday when he was speaking on how important our

health care in the province of Ontario is, how much health care we have. He talked about the doctors, talked about the nurses; he talked about the efficiency in our health care. That's why today, the Minister of Health introduced a very important element to protect the health care dollars from being wasted on lobbyists.

We address all those issues when we face them, when we see them—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the opportunity—because the member wandered a bit during his speech—to be able to deal with some of his wanderings.

I have a document here that says: "Ontario Hydro has been involved in negotiations with Manitoba Hydro on a proposal which would secure 1,000 megawatts of power for Ontario beginning "in the year" 2000, for 23 years.

"The proposal would entail Manitoba Hydro constructing a 1,300-megawatt generating station in Conawapa and then selling 1,000 megawatts of that ... to Ontario.

"Manitoba has indicated that Ontario Hydro's purchase of power is a critical factor in determining whether or not to proceed with the project."

Of course, what we found out was that the NDP government, of which my good friend from Kenora—Rainy River was involved deeply—a chief spokesperson—cancelled that contract. I think it was about 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour for that. I'll tell you, that would have certainly helped northern Ontario now.

He talks about a lower industrial rate, and I'm wondering who, then, would pay more. If one segment of a society is paying less, that means somebody else is going to pay more for their power.

The last thing I want to mention, because he touched on this particular issue—I'm wondering if the lobbyists to which he made reference are going to be stopped at the door at the Palais Royale, where the NDP is having its fundraiser on November 27. I think it's a little over \$9,000 for a full table. There are lots of special deals you can get if you have lots of money to shell out. I'm asking the member if he will stop those lobbyists from attending that particular event.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kenora—Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to respond, and I want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for their comments.

I would simply like to remind the minister of—I guess we'd call him community security and corrections—that it was the McGuinty government that promised, and in fact made a public announcement, that it was going to restore the Conawapa contract, and now, seven years later, has failed to do that. I can't understand how you want to hold me accountable for your own failure to fulfill your own promise.

Second, if the minister knew anything about electricity in Ontario, he would know that northern Ontario actually

has a surplus of electricity. Indeed, the northwestern part of the province has a very large surplus of electricity that cannot be transmitted to the rest of Ontario. In northern Ontario today, you literally have hydro dams where they've opened the chutes and the water is running down the river because no one can afford to use that electricity at the price this government wants to charge; hydro dams where the electricity costs less than 2 cents a kilowatt hour to produce, but paper mills are being told by this government they have to spend 12 cents and 13 cents a kilowatt hour for the electricity.

That is the problem with the McGuinty Liberals' electricity policy. That is a policy which is killing resource and manufacturing jobs across this province.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to request the unanimous consent of the House to allow the member to go on further to explain whether lobbyists are allowed to go to the fundraiser of the NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: After what we've heard in the debate, I think it would be a good time to get—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Let's just quiet down a bit so we can hear the member for Ottawa—Orléans, please.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Just to redefine what this bill is, it's An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. We haven't been near that topic for a while in this Legislature, and I think it's important to get back there.

This act keeps our government up to date. Legislation must keep up with the times and remain current. The content of this act would ensure that existing legislation remains up to date. This is an important function of government. If passed, this act would improve clarity and modernize a number of our provincial laws, regulations and systems.

The bill includes approximately seven amendments to legislation from seven different ministries, but I just want to get to the point of what it involves with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Most of the provisions are technical changes to existing acts but are necessary because they would improve clarity and keep the laws' language current. This bill is an essential housekeeping measure.

The act furthers our Open for Business initiative. This bill builds upon our government's Open for Business initiative. Since the McGuinty government came into office in 2003, we have demonstrated our commitment to working with the business community to address barriers to investment and growth. The legislation will further the Open for Business goals of decreased regulatory burden and better responsiveness to business. If passed, this act would improve services provided to business and the public. If passed, it would help to ensure the necessary structures are in place to streamline services for business and the public.

As many of you know, our government is committed to a health care system that is patient-focused and strives towards value and quality improvement. This involves this bill—I would just like you to be patient, Mr. Speaker. Since 2003, we have made significant investments and improvements that have had and continue to have positive impacts on the health of Ontarians.

1710

I'd like to spend a moment to highlight some of our accomplishments so far. We've increased access to doctors and reduced wait times. We've implemented a public wait times monitoring website that did not exist prior to 2003. We have made significant investments that have resulted in over 900,000 Ontarians, who didn't have a doctor in 2003, successfully attached to one today. There are 2,300 more doctors in Ontario today than in 2003.

Recently, we introduced the Excellent Care for All Act. This is new legislation to help refocus our efforts on patient care. This landmark legislation will lay the groundwork for a significant culture shift in the province's health care system. It's a cultural shift that must occur if this system is to be there in the future. The Excellent Care for All Act will ensure that we tie increases in spending to improvements in quality. Health care is too important for us to allow inefficiency and a lack of transparency.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, our government is taking a leadership role in finding more efficient ways of improving our health care system. Part of rebuilding Ontario's health involves ensuring that our legislation is current, and Bill 110, the Good Government Act, if passed, provides an opportunity to do so.

Now I'll give you an overview of the proposed repeals and amendments as it impacts the health care act. The first set of amendments involves the Community Care Access Corporations Act. Amendments to this act would streamline and clarify the current regulatory environment by removing duplicate provisions and adding a new one to align the fiscal year of the community care access centre to the government's fiscal year. This is just good government. It is important to do these things.

We are proposing to repeal sections of the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act to remove references to osteopaths from the list of persons deemed qualified to operate an X-ray machine, prescribe an X-ray and serve as a radiation protection officer. At this time, osteopaths are no longer a regulated health profession in Ontario. We have to make this amendment.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is also proposing to change sections of the Health Protection and Promotion Act. The act includes references to facilities under the Nursing Homes Act, the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act, and the Charitable Institutions Act. These acts were repealed when the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, was proclaimed in that year. A technical amendment is required to remove the outdated references and include a reference to long-term-care homes under the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007. It is

good government to make sure that these amendments are made.

The proposed amendments to the Home Care and Community Services Act would remove all references to multi-service agencies and boards of health. These models are outdated and have never been implemented. This proposal would update the current legislation to provide community services. Again, this is good government.

The proposed amendments also help to clarify the Independent Health Facilities Act, relating to requirements for licensees of independent health facilities. The proposed changes remove provisions that are outdated and ones that are not required to ensure public accountability and patient health and safety. This again is good government.

The proposal includes amendments and repeals of certain sections of the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act. Among them is an amendment that will help to streamline the regulatory framework, ensuring greater compliance for laboratories. Again, this is a good thing to do.

The proposed amendments would also remove references to the Minister of Finance related to the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion Act. Currently, there is a reference to the Minister of Finance in the sections involving immunity provisions. This is simply a housekeeping amendment as the Minister of Finance does not actually have any powers or duties under this act. Again, it is good government to clean that up.

We also are proposing changes to the Physician Services Delivery Management Act. This act designates the rights and obligations that limit the crown's liability regarding the funding and provision of insured services between the Ontario Medical Association and the provinces. The agreements listed in this act have expired and are no longer in effect, or have been replaced with new agreements. If you listen to the opposition, you would think that you would keep these obsolete provisions around forever. It is good government that we are making these changes.

Let me conclude. The proposed amendments would provide clarity to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care legislation. It would also help to make the regulatory framework more streamlined and contribute to the government's commitment to reduce regulatory burden. In all of this, Ontario patients are our number one priority and focus, so I encourage all members to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll have an opportunity to speak a little bit longer in a few moments, but I do appreciate my colleague's speaking to the bill.

Let's be very clear: There might be 70 items in this piece of legislation, but it is hardly a piece of legislation that is of substance. I think back to the comments of my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke or my

colleague from Kenora–Rainy River, and what this House is looking for is a jobs plan, an action plan that is going to help Ontarians who have felt the brunt of the recession. That, I think, would classify as good government.

This bill, on the other hand, is essentially a bureaucratic bill that deals with very few real details on how to make life here in Ontario better for our constituents. In fact, one of the amendments is to a bill they put forward last year, in 2009, called the Good Government Act. I think that that, in and of itself, speaks volumes for what the desire is from this government. They weren't able to achieve good government last year. What makes them think they're going to achieve it with this piece of legislation? After all, they were named by the National Post as—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Canada's worst government.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Canada's worst government, and that's very sad.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They hold the record.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They hold the record. So, it's a bit of an oxymoron for the Liberal Party of Ontario to put forward a piece of legislation that says "good government" when everyone knows they are the worst government in the country at this juncture.

I hear a lot of excitement on the government side. I think it's the first time in months that we've heard from them in an excitable fashion. It's good to see most of them coming back to work because, again, part of good government is actually showing up as government to work and not having 30-odd members missing each and every day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Un gouvernement doit toujours s'assurer d'une saine gestion publique. La raison d'être de ce projet de loi est bel et bien ça.

It is very important that this is exactly what the McGuinty government wants to assure Ontarians. A good government should always have a vision for the future, and again, this is exactly what we've been doing ever since we got elected in 2004.

Again, when I looked at the discussion we had, especially yesterday, I don't think the opposition should criticize this bill at all. They should look at themselves, because when I look at what happened during the previous government, especially at electricity when, way back in 2002, they decided to freeze electricity at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, I don't know if you would call that good government, because at the time we had to purchase electricity at \$1.33 a kilowatt hour and sell it at 4.3 cents.

As my colleague the minister said a little while ago, the NDP cancelled a contract with Manitoba for 1,000 megawatts. The previous government, the Tories, really cancelled another contract with the province of Quebec for 1,250 megawatts. At that time, they tried to get

investors to invest in Ontario so that they could upgrade our electricity generation. They couldn't find anyone—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'll tell you, I couldn't really hear much of the member for Ottawa–Orléans. I was trying to catch a bit of a nap here; it was rather boring. But I can tell that the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is in quite a lather. You see, these folks had their little convention—their mini-convention—last weekend, and this is what their game plan is now. They don't want to talk about their record. They want to talk about some things that happened in the past or maybe didn't happen in the past. I can tell you about the previous government. You see, the previous government, in its eight-year term, created 1,088,000 new, private sector, sustainable jobs in this province. What have we seen in seven years under the McGuinty government? Loss after loss after loss: 300,000 manufacturing jobs in Ontario gone.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

1720

Mr. John Yakabuski: You see, they had their little convention, and the Premier got up there. You know, they're just like little Pinocchios on the string, and he's telling them, "Folks, if we just don't talk about our record—we're going to make them all think of something else; we're going to get them to go back into history. But don't talk about our record. We've got to get them off our record. We don't want them to really take a close look at how we have failed, and failed so miserably in office in this province."

But let me assure you folks that the people in Ontario—Premier McGuinty can fool his 70 Liberal caucus members, but he cannot and he will not fool 13 million Ontarians. Not next time, folks, not next time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Certainly, the member opposite didn't enjoy my colleague's speech. It was an excellent speech, because he spoke to the topic, he spoke about the importance of this bill and why we have to pass it. Rather, they like to speak about many different elements, which we're all concerned about, like jobs, like health care, like education, which we are dealing with in a professional manner.

I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Ottawa–Orléans for his speech, where he outlined how important this bill would be for the people of Ontario who access the government and the regulations and laws of the government of Ontario.

This bill, as he mentioned, will effect almost 70 amendments and also affect seven ministries. The aim and the most important thing that this bill will do is modernize our system and make it accessible, because it's important, if you want to be a good government, to be accessible. You have to make the rules and regulations

accessible to the people so that people are able to use them and read them. That's what we're trying to do.

I know the member opposite likes to speak about many different elements. They had a chance to govern. What did we have? We had a disaster in the province of Ontario. We had chaos with electricity, health care, education and loss of jobs. That's why I'm standing up and supporting my colleague, the member from Ottawa—Orléans, for his speech, because he outlined the right things. I congratulate him and wish him luck and success. He's a great member who represents his constituents very well on a regular basis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ottawa—Orléans, you have to up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to thank the member from Nepean—Carleton—she still does not understand the bill.

Merci à mon ami, le député de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. Il a bien parlé sur l'électricité.

I'd also like to thank the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke—King Coal, as he's known in this House. He'd like to go back to cheap, dirty energy like a lot of countries in this world that want to stay on dirty coal. They don't have any concerns for the health of their people or the health of the planet.

I'd like to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for his good support and his understanding that we're dealing with a bill that is necessary. It's not the most dynamic bill that's ever been made, but a bill that is extremely important for good government. And if you had looked at it that way without going into all the areas where you wanted to get off topic, you would have known that this act keeps our government up to date, and that's important. The legislation must be kept up to date.

If passed, this act would improve clarity and modernize a number of our provincial laws, regulations and systems—I have to repeat this part, because you seem to have missed it. The bill includes approximately 70 amendments to legislation from seven different ministries. You just heard the ones from health care today, and they're important ones for health care. They're important ones for the people of Ottawa—Orléans, I'm sure, and of the overall province.

If you had looked at this and read the bill and understood that this is a necessary thing—it's not the most exciting bill that will ever come your way, but it's important and it has to be done. It helps our businesses work with government.

The act furthers our Open for Business initiative. This bill builds upon our government's Open for Business initiative. Since the McGuinty government came to office, we have demonstrated our commitment to working with the business—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to enter the debate today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and PC leader Tim Hudak.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate our critic, Ted Chudleigh, as well as our other critics Christine Elliott and John O'Toole. I apologize too; I should have referred to them by their ridings: Halton, Whitby—Oshawa, and Durham. They've put a lot of effort into this because this bill does deal with 70 different pieces of legislation.

Just to name a few, just to say how significant this bill could have been, had they really done a thorough review: the alcohol and gaming regulation, the Evidence Act, the Gaming Control Act, the Liquor Licence Act, the Provincial Offences Act—the Justices of the Peace Act—what I find personally amusing in this piece of legislation is that they're already amending the so-called Good Government Act, 2009—the vintners quality act and others.

In particular, when I look at some of the health acts that are going to be amended, we're looking at the Community Care Access Corporations Act, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Home Care and Community Services Act and the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act.

I think, when you look at some of the health care acts that are being amended, we can be doing a better job in Ontario on health care and we should have taken this into consideration, particularly in light of today's Auditor General's report, where we see that hospitals have had to resort to paying lobbyists with taxpayer dollars intended for front-line care to lobby the Minister of Health or provincial bureaucrats or political staff under Mr. McGuinty's regime.

The reality that we have here is that good governance hasn't taken place. So to name this act a good government act is a bit of a misnomer. In fact, I would argue that it's actually an oxymoron when you consider that it has been widely regarded across Ontario that this is Canada's worst government. In fact, it was published in the National Post.

I've spoken to a number of my constituents, as many of us have over the summer and during the break week. You hear concerns from folks, whether it's on high hydro rates or the HST. When we had the eco taxes and that \$85 million—which, by the way, hasn't been paid back to people, even though the minister has backtracked—when you're looking at the pocketbook issues of Ontarians, good governance to them is actually respecting their tax dollars and ensuring that they get value for their tax dollar. That does not appear to happen, as we know from today's Auditor General's report.

But even more, we notice that small businesses are having a rough time making ends meet. I've heard just horrible stories from small businesses in my riding. In particular, I must say that I and my colleagues from York—Simcoe and Halton met with some restaurateurs who were telling us that this government is hurting their bottom line.

The reality is, until some of those fundamental changes happen—my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River discussed the pulp and paper industry, and I'm

talking about restaurateurs from different places; for example, London and Ottawa. The reality is that these people are having a really difficult time, and this government doesn't seem to be listening to them.

I have a great little coffee shop in my riding called the Two Monkeys café. I've been told that they had to let go a staff member based on the high hydro rates that they have. They're not able to keep up their competitive advantage. That's sad, and I'll tell you why, about this particular coffee shop.

As you know, I'm one of the few members—there are a few of us here—who have small children. Two Monkeys café is named aptly for two monkeys: two children. The front is a regular coffee shop, for coffee lovers who want to go in there and maybe take their laptop to use the Wi-Fi. In the back, which is almost separated, is an inside playground for children so that moms and dads, like me and my husband, can go and have our coffee.

1730

The reality is, this government, this Liberal government, is not looking after the competitive advantage that my constituents need to run a successful small business. In fact, if you want to talk about good government, you would give them the tools so that they can succeed on their own. But that's not happening here because of the high energy prices. The high cost of doing business in Ontario is making it more difficult for my friends at Two Monkeys or any other restaurant or hospitality service or hotel in this province to succeed. We heard again from my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River, who talked about this government's catastrophic policies in his constituency.

I think, too, of the people who volunteer their time and their efforts only to find out that this government is telling them, for example, that they shouldn't be spending Saturday at the Metcalfe Fair or doing anything political or community-oriented because Mr. McGuinty thinks that they ought to be at home doing their laundry. That's not good governance; that's overbearing. The reality is, these folks who want to contribute to their communities are being told, "No, no, no. It's Saturday. Do your laundry."

The list continually goes on when we see examples of bad government, things like sex education for six-year-olds—that was in today's Toronto Sun—when we're talking about some of the other issues. Today my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and my other colleague from Leeds-Grenville ate a Double Down out in the front because Mr. McGuinty and his cabinet were considering banning them. They were considering banning chocolate milk in schools.

This is a government that is so out of touch. "Good government" doesn't need to be the name of a bill; it just needs to happen. But they've forgotten about it. They've been so out of touch for so long now, and out of gas, that what has really occurred is that there isn't good governance happening right now. One of my colleagues from the Liberal Party said, "Well, what's good for the

government is good for the opposition," and that couldn't be further from the truth. He's just saying this because he wants us to support a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, doesn't really mean anything.

I go back to the reality, as my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke spoke about, when the previous government created a situation in Ontario where one million new jobs were created because of the economic environment. If you think back, we have lost hundreds of thousands of jobs: full-time jobs, well-paying jobs, manufacturing jobs, forestry sector jobs. I just mentioned we have lost some in the hospitality industry. We've lost them under their watch, but they're so upset at their record that they get so venomous when they want to attack back and protect their own record. The record speaks for itself; the numbers speak for themselves.

This was a province that was the economic powerhouse of Confederation at one point in time. It was where every Canadian would see their home. They wanted to grow a family. They came to Ontario. They came from around the world because they believed in prosperity and the ability to harness that, to create a better life for your family. Instead, what has happened under this sort of nanny state—"Dalton McGuinty knows best"—is that we have seen an erosion of that personal freedom. And it's not like people want it to go overboard, but what they want is to have an ability to live their lives. They want to know that on Saturday, if they would like to go to the Metcalfe Fair or the Richmond Fair or if they would like to go to Lansdowne Park, they can do that. But this government here, instead, turns to every family that I represent and says, "Hey, you shouldn't be doing that; you should be doing laundry. So go on downstairs to the laundry room and load up the whites, load up the colours, load up the towels, and then just get it done. And make sure you get the rinse and that whole cycle done and get the spin cycle done and get it all dried up before Saturday night, because you need to be in by a certain time to make sure your kids don't have chocolate milk to watch Hockey Night in Canada."

The reality is, people are fed up. They're just so tired of this government. That's why, of course—I have to say it again—the National Post called this Canada's worst government. The reality is that it speaks for itself. I think of my colleague from Durham who spoke to this bill yesterday. He's one of the many critics on this bill because, as I mentioned, they've decided to open up 70 acts. They've not decided to do that well, mind you, but they've decided to open up 70 acts. He says he's got serious concerns over the way this Liberal government is governing this great province.

And I think, to my colleague from Halton, who—what will happen is, as the Liberals get up to speak, they'll start blaming Mike Harris and they'll start blaming Ernie Eves. They'll blame everybody. He said, "You know, they will actually probably try to blame Sir John A. Macdonald." There was a point last year on these HST cheques that were given to the HST tax collectors.

Remember the \$45,000 severances? Do you know who they blamed on that? John Robarts. I think John Robarts was out of office before I was even born. This is how desperate this Liberal government is.

This shouldn't be called the Good Government Act; it should be called the desperate government act, because this government is nothing short of desperate. When you look at today's issue, at the Auditor General's report and how he's uncovered that they've used public tax dollars at hospitals to lobby the government, and then came out with a bill that's not anywhere near as strong as the bill we put forward in May, you'd be shocked. But do you know what? They've lost touch with everyday Ontarians, and it's time for them to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Nickel Belt.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just before the member for Nickel Belt starts: You've had your time; you've listened; now we're going to listen to the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France G  linas: It was most interesting to listen to the member from Nepean-Carleton. She talks about what a good government would look like on the ground in her own riding. She gave us a real-life view of what it means in her riding when good governments are in place. She talked about small businesses that would be allowed to thrive, talked about healthy communities. This is what a good government does. They bring in healthy people, healthy families, healthy businesses and healthy communities so that all of this can thrive. She tried to show, through her experience as an MPP and through the experience of the people whom she shared her life with, that they need a good government in order for them to have a good life, and basically showed that this is not really happening.

When we have comments coming from this government that talk about, "Do your laundry on Saturday," I'm sorry; this is not acceptable. We expect more than this from our government. Never mind being good government; we expect more than this just to be an average government.

Interjections.

M^{me} France G  linas: I'm laughing at some of the comments that are being made.

But really, what she brought forward were real-life examples. This is what people expect from the MPP and this is what she did. She brought us what the situation looks like in her riding, because we do not have a good government right now.

I support what she said, and hopefully others will as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to stand and speak about the Good Government Act.

I don't expect the members from that side of the House to vote for the Good Government Act. Do you want to know why? Because they don't want good

government. They don't want healthy communities. They don't want a strong economic package that works for the people of Ontario—they don't want that. That's why they'll vote against this Good Government Act.

When we think about the health care that is available to the people of Ontario, how it has been strengthened, and our education system, and we hear the member from Nepean-Carleton—when they were in government, they lost 26 million school days. So I say to the member from across the way: I don't expect her to support this. Because what does it take to make the people of Ontario strong? It takes a strong health care system, it takes a strong education system and it also takes a strong business environment, where our businesses can prosper. There has been so much work done. This is further emphasized by the Good Government Act.

When I think about the HST, her federal cousins get it. But on that side of the House, they don't get it. They wouldn't even get it if it came up and knocked on the door in Nepean-Carleton. They don't understand what the business community needs.

When I see the member rise in the House and talk about, "Everything should be the way it was," well, it's not going to be. We have to move and change and bring an electricity system forward that will meet our needs going now into the future.

1740

I wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to say what they did when they were in government and shut down my riding with their energy policy. Let's talk about that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Boy, we've got the lady from Huron-Bruce all lathered up, too.

The Liberals' convention on the weekend—we've seen the news reports from that and you see that they're going to get down into the gutter and practise the kind of politics that Liberals practise when they're desperate. Do you know who was there? Warren Kinsella. He's quite a piece of work. A couple of years ago, when my colleague from Nepean-Carleton—she's talking about having to do the laundry at night—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's going to have to bake her cookies at night now, too. That was a big sexist thing that Warren Kinsella had on his blog, that she'd rather be baking cookies. No, she'd rather be here serving her constituents. But, you see, that Kinsella, he's quite a piece of work. There will be a thing on his blog about me tomorrow, you watch, because that's the kind of low-life, gutless political practitioner he is.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think the language is getting just a little stronger than parliamentary language should be. So let's temper our language a bit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. He is quite a piece of work. There's no depth that is too low for him to sink to when it comes to political action taking

place. You see, that's the kind convention they had on the weekend. It was Warren Kinsella: "Okay, this is how we're going to attack, attack." Gutter politics, and we're going get down into that kind of mode where we reduce the debate to the level of the lowest possible common denominator.

You know what they don't want to talk about? They don't want to talk about their record of the last seven years. But you know what? The people are tired of the Warren Kinsellas of this world. The people are tired of Warren Kinsella. They want a new government. They're going to have that opportunity next year.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll be in Warren's blog tomorrow.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll be in the blog tomorrow—oh, I'm sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Are you really? Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: There has to be some note of civility in the discussion here this afternoon, so I would say it's great to see the good spirits here.

The member from Nepean—Carleton obviously touched a nerve, and when the Minister of Agriculture so rudely interrupted her, I was quite surprised at how aggressive the attack was.

In fact, this is about good government by a government that's on retreat. When they have to bring in message managers like Warren Kinsella, it shows that they've run out of messages that actually work. If you look at their energy plan right now as one example, it is a complete sham. George Smitherman set Brad Duguid up like a golf ball on a tee because the smart meters—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Durham knows full well that we don't use names; we use positions.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Energy, with all due respect, has a file that he doesn't have the foggiest idea about. He says that we did nothing. We refurbished the nuclear plants.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He set him up on a tee and drove him into a hazard.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. To me, if he only knew what was being done—the refurbishment of the plants. They still haven't looked at the new-build nuclear in Durham, but they're putting 80-cent wind and solar power on the grid. Clearly, the question periods today and yesterday and all week show that they have a failed policy. That's the issue on the table here.

One more thing they're doing with this particular Bill 110 is, they're really making an obscure motion to outsource almost all the decision-making from the minister or order in council to public servants who aren't accountable to the electorate. I think they're walking—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Nepean—Carleton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was the most entertaining 10 minutes I've had in here in a long time.

I want to say thank you very much to my colleague from Nickel Belt for joining the debate today. I'd also like to thank my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke—and if it was not clear, he wants to be in Warren Kinsella's blog tomorrow, so if my colleagues from the Liberal Party can arrange for that, that would be great.

I'd also like to thank my colleague from Durham, who has spoken to this bill many times as one of the critics—because, as we mentioned, it does deal with 70 different pieces of legislation.

In Ontario today—we are loath to say this because it's sometimes overused, but I actually believe it right now—we're at a crossroads. I think it's incumbent upon all members here to remember that we need to get back on the road to economic recovery, and for that we need good governance. This bill is not appropriately named. The reality is, the challenges that we've seen in the last seven and a half years are a result of one government and one government only, and I think it's important that we convey that today.

Just to the point of my colleague from Nickel Belt, talking about community: That's why today I thought it was important to bring forward the concerns I heard from my community. I'm hearing them more frequently, and I'm sure you're hearing them as well, with the high hydro costs, with the high cost of doing business in Ontario. It's pretty tough these days to raise a family in Ontario. It's very expensive. As a chamber, I think we need to very studiously and thoughtfully have that conversation—and it doesn't happen when you wrongly name a bill. You have to put a little bit more energy and effort into being good government than just putting forward an omnibus bill with a title that makes you feel good.

I want to say thank you for your indulgence here today. I appreciate my colleagues and their spirited debate. We're going to have some fun. I'm looking forward to my colleague from Nickel Belt providing her understanding of this bill as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to talk about Bill 110, the Good Government Act. It is really hard to be standing here today talking about good government after having read the special report from the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, which talks about the use of consultants within the broader health care system. Some of what you read in there will truly make you sick. Let me read some of this for the record.

So, we have in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Nickel Belt, don't read too much, and relate it to the bill, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We are talking about good government. How can we talk about good government when we see consultant contracts for \$398 per hour; when we see the Minister of Health spending \$2.6 million through

the transfer payments agency with no specific project deliverables, no expectations? We see health care consultants charging \$500 a night for a hotel room, then \$700 a night for a hotel room in Singapore. We see \$300 for a dinner in Toronto; \$140 of this is alcohol. We see \$350 for another dinner in Toronto; \$215 of this was alcohol. How can we have this debate about good government when things like this are going on? This is not good government. And then we look at what they put forward as a report to this.

To me this is a five-star alarm, what's going on within our health care system. I expect the government to come out and react the way that everybody else reacts when we see our taxpayers' dollars going out the door like this, and what do they do? They bring in a bill that, even if it's fully implemented exactly the way they have designed it, will not keep hospitals from hiring lobbyists, will not keep hospitals from overpaying consultants for not getting too much value for money, and this is if the bill is fully implemented. This is the way they have designed it. This is not good government.

1750

Good government would make sure that we regain confidence in our health care system, not put out half-baked measures that don't do what everybody in Ontario wants. Nobody in Ontario wants hospitals to be hiring lobbyists to lobby the government, but yet we won't see this in this bill.

It's hard to digest why this is happening. If we really had a bill that was talking about good government, would we have all those kids on the front lawns of Queen's Park right now? They're all wearing purple. They're wearing purple because so many kids belonging to the LGBTTQ community have committed suicide. How can it be in a province like Ontario, in 2010, that we have kids who are so desperate that they see the only way out as suicide? Their friends are standing on the front lawn right now trying to bring attention to this awful thing playing out throughout communities in Ontario.

If we had good government we would have been proactive. We would have helped members of the LGBTTQ community so that their members don't get so desperate that they commit suicide. But none of this is in the good government bill. Those kids will continue to sing songs and hold vigils for the friends that they lost, and we are in here talking about a good government bill that does nothing for them.

Si on avait vraiment un bon gouvernement, on verrait un gouvernement qui respecte ses propres lois. On a une loi en Ontario, la Loi sur les services en français, qui dit que tous les services du gouvernement devraient être disponibles en français et en anglais en même temps. Mais, vous vous souvenez tous, l'automne dernier, on parlait de la grippe H1N1. Le gouvernement a dépensé pour envoyer à chaque foyer de l'Ontario une brochure en anglais seulement. Comment ça se fait qu'on est rendu à 2010, qu'on est supposé avoir un bon gouvernement, qu'on fait même des lois qui s'appellent « bon gouvernement », et on envoie une brochure à la grandeur

de la province en anglais seulement sur un sujet aussi important l'automne dernier, qui était la grippe H1N1?

If we look at—si on regarde les plaques d'immatriculation—je me suis trompée de langue pour une seconde—on voit la même chose. Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes veulent souvent afficher avec une plaque d'immatriculation personnalisée qui dit « Tant à découvrir ». Mais non; on ne peut pas avoir ça. Il y a 70 différents modèles qui existent, toutes en anglais. On en a une qui existe en français, celle avec notre beau drapeau franco-ontarien; c'est très beau, mais c'est très limité. Pourquoi les anglophones ont le choix de 70 modèles, puis les francophones, on a le choix de un?

L'ironie de tout ça, c'est que si tu prends celle avec le drapeau franco-ontarien, tu peux l'avoir en anglais. C'est un peu bizarre, cette affaire. Mais pour les francophones, ça va de bizarre à insultant vraiment.

If we had good government, we would not let people wait over 618 days before they get into a long-term-care home. That is two long years before you get into a long-term-care home. This is a complete disrespect to those people.

If we had good government, we wouldn't have 20% of the beds in all of the 155 hospitals occupied by alternate level of care patients. Those are people who have supported this province, who have given us the best years of their lives, and in their moments of need we leave them in a hospital bed where they are not receiving the care they need; where they are not being treated with the dignity and the respect they deserve. We leave them there for days, weeks, months and sometimes years at a time, depending on where in Ontario you live. This is not good government. This is not good health care.

If we had good government, we would have interdisciplinary practices throughout Ontario. They keep announcing family health teams. Well, family health teams, so far, haven't moved beyond an alternate payment plan. If you take all of the physicians in family health teams—they range into the thousands—you don't even have that many of all of the other—whether you put nurse practitioners, nurses, nursing assistants, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, podiatrists, social workers—if you put all of them together, they don't even equate to the number of physicians in the family health teams. Those are not teams; they're alternate payment plans, and they're a dyad at the most.

This is not what we need. A good government would make sure that those models are more than just PR and are actually rolled out on the ground as providing good-quality care.

We all know that interdisciplinary care is the way to treat chronic illness, which is what we see the most of. Eighty per cent of a primary care practice will be managing chronic disease.

Do we see good government? Well, we see good PR and we see good announcements, but we don't always see good government in there.

We want, as people have said before, a government that takes responsibility for their actions. After the report

was tabled today, the Ontario Hospital Association was swift and decisive. They came out with a full apology. I can read it. They apologize "without reservation to all Ontarians for failing to meet their expectations with respect to the hiring and management of consultants." They took responsibility. This is the first step in making things better.

When we asked the Minister of Health to take responsibility, she didn't. She said she was quite willing to apologize, but really it was somebody else's fault: "It has nothing to do with us." That encourages a culture of self-indulgence with taxpayers' money.

There are many steps that could be taken that would bring us to good government in this province. I don't see any of them in Bill 110. I don't see any of them in the Good Government Act of 2010. I guess we'll have to keep waiting.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As I have said before, there are a number of timepieces in the Legislature, but I always rely on my little pocket watch.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday morning, October 21.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

**Thursday 21 October 2010****Jeudi 21 octobre 2010**

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 15, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 68. As you know, this bill affects 10 different ministries. My colleagues have addressed some of the broader problems with this bill, so I want to focus on a particular concern of my caucus and of farmers across Ontario: the changes to the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act.

The McGuinty government claims this legislation is about streamlining and cutting red tape, but they neglect to mention that it also weakens protection for farmers who lose livestock to predators. In fact, the government didn't even mention these changes in the briefing package they distributed on this bill. I raised this concern in the spring during second reading, but when I look through the amended version of the bill, there are no changes to ensure that farmers will be protected and that farmers receive the compensation they need.

Currently, it is legislated by the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act that farmers who lose livestock to predators such as wolves, coyotes or dogs must be compensated—I emphasize the word “must.” Although all compensation is delivered by municipalities, the compensation for livestock killed by wolves and coyotes is funded by the province. If this legislation is passed as written, the only compensation that will be guaranteed through legislation is for livestock killed by dogs, which is the part funded by municipalities.

The McGuinty government wants to move compensation for livestock killed by wolves and coyotes, as well as damage to honey bee hives by bears, into regulation. This means they can change or reduce the compensation at any time behind closed doors without any consultation. The McGuinty government says this was in response to requests from stakeholders, but what stakeholders had been asking for was not to have legislation weakened; it was to have the compensation schedule updated. That isn't in the legislation. That is in the regulation, and the government could have done that at any time. They don't need to change the legislation to do that. As PCs, we are supportive of updating the compensation levels and we are supportive of expanding what is covered, but we cannot support changes that will weaken the protection for our farmers.

When the bill was introduced, it said that compensation would be provided through regulation, but there was no plan for what the new regulations would look like. In fact, during the AMO conference, the minister met with the mayors and boasted that the draft regulations were on the website. The mayors looked and couldn't find them because they weren't posted until a week after the AMO conference.

Now that the discussion paper has been posted, we can see there are a number of problems with the draft regulations. The proposed funding is a federal-provincial split, which likely means that the minister is planning to take the money out of the risk management programs, which provide direct support to farmers, to fund this compensation. My office emailed for clarification from the minister's office on August 25, and we're still waiting for a response. That is almost two months ago, and I have to admit that I'm starting to wonder if they're ever going to answer that question.

In fact, going through the discussion paper, I discovered that they are proposing that “compensation would be allowable income in the program year in the Agri-Stability program but not in the reference period.” This means that the compensation paid to farmers for livestock that is lost to predators would take away from the amount of support that farmers will be eligible to receive in that year. The government is trying to have it both ways, because when they assess what the farmer has earned over the past five years to calculate any future support payments, the compensation won't count as income.

At the end of the discussion paper is a description of the current program that includes a line that says, “Over the past seven years, claims under the program have

increased from \$755,000 in 2002-3 to \$1.469 million in 2009-10." If the McGuinty government's goal isn't to reduce costs, why is that line in the paper at all?

The truth is that the amount of livestock being lost to predators is increasing. A recent article in the Kingston Whig-Standard says, "In Leeds-Grenville, the Ontario government paid \$85,000 to farmers last year to compensate for lost livestock, mainly sheep and calves. That's more than double what was doled out in 2007-8, when \$40,000 was paid to area farmers, according to the agriculture ministry spokesman." A councillor in Picton said the coyote infestation in their area is "almost at crisis level." Farm Forum magazine reports "record numbers of marauding coyotes."

Instead of dealing with the problem or ensuring that farmers are being properly compensated for their losses, this government is looking at ways it can cut its own costs by taking it out of the farmers' pockets. I've already explained the impact on support payments, but reading the discussion paper, it seems there are other ways they are trying to put the cost back on to our farmers.

0910

When a farmer loses livestock, they must call a valuer out to the farm to verify. That's the same as our present system. However, when the valuer comes out to the farm under the new proposal, "If the evidence is inconclusive, but the probable cause of loss is from an eligible predator, the producer would receive one-half payment." That means that unless the valuer actually sees the coyote attacking livestock when they go out to the farm, the farmer's compensation could be cut by 50%. In addition, they can deny compensation if there are any steps the farmer could have taken to avoid the loss. With a government that's trying to cut costs, that rule could easily be used against farmers.

Farmers are always better off raising livestock and sending it to market. The government is implying that farmers are intentionally encouraging predators to get compensation. We know that isn't true. Farmers are taking all reasonable steps to avoid losses. Once again, the government is demonstrating how little they think of farmers.

They've also demonstrated that with the inclusion of a remedial course, and I find this most interesting. If farmers have multiple claims, the government proposes to force them to attend "a wildlife best management practices workshop" before they're eligible for any further compensation. Once again, they seem to be thinking the worst of farmers. Instead of offering helpful information or dealing with predator problems, they are designing the rules to punish our farmers.

Another concern raised by farmers is that proposed regulations value livestock at time of death rather than at potential value. The current method accounts for future value. This means that a farmer who now loses a calf is only compensated for what he could get for that calf today, not the income he loses because he no longer has the ability to raise the calf and sell it full-grown. So we

get the value of a newborn calf, because it was destroyed today, and the loss will be that calf for the whole season.

There was a recent article in the Ottawa Sun on this issue, and the first line of the article read, "City hall's rural services department is bracing for some controversy over the province's proposal." The article went on to quote a staff memo to the city's agriculture and rural affairs committee that said the proposal is "a cause for concern" because "coyotes target calves over weaned cattle." This is more proof that the McGuinty government just doesn't understand or support our farmers.

We saw that when they cut support for deadstock removal with no plan in place. We saw that when they gave money to dead and retired farmers and then simply ignored beginning farmers who didn't receive the support they needed. We saw that when they tried to ban good Ontario chocolate milk in 500-millilitre containers from our schools. We saw it when they transferred money out of the programs that provide direct support for farmers and used it for other priorities. We see it every day in their response to farmers asking for business risk management based on the cost of production.

Our farmers need a government that is fair, honest and trustworthy, not one that tries to sneak in cuts to compensation in an omnibus bill. I urge the government to remove this section from the bill immediately and update the compensation schedule. If they want to make changes to the program to make it work better for farmers, they should introduce a new bill to amend the Livestock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act to ensure that our farmers have the protection they deserve.

In wrapping up, I'd just like to point out, on business risk management, how little they think of farmers. One minute they have the business risk management program that includes the cost of production in the program. They have a three-year pilot program. Everybody—farmers, ministry, the minister herself—supported the program; it worked well. But they decided not to continue the pilot program. When all of a sudden the prices are going up, so it will not cost a lot, for public relations they put it back in for one year for grain and oilseeds.

The program is identical for all the other commodities. The government asked them to prepare the program. All the commodities prepared the program. But would the minister include them in this pilot extension? No. She will do nothing for those. She's just going to carry that other program on for another year—I believe that would be after the next election—and I guess we can assume that will be the end of the program, because that was the only reason it was extended.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me a few moments to speak to the bill. I want to tell you that the part that deals with agriculture in the Open for Business Act is not going to open agriculture for business in Ontario. In fact, it's going to help close the door on a lot of livestock producers who are no longer going to get paid for predator damage—predator damage caused by the predators that the government is responsible for. I think the government should be ashamed of themselves for doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: First, I want to apologize. I very much want to apologize in advance for anything I say this morning that might be rude or inappropriate, and I want to withdraw in advance anything I say that's unparliamentary.

I want to acknowledge that I'm wont, from time to time, to meander. I consider it a function of age. Quite frankly, any effort on people's parts to address that is an insult to me as a middle-aged male who is prone to meandering. So I hope we have that clearly on the record now, and that perhaps may moderate some of the silly points of order that members of the government, who are otherwise unable to get on the record, are inclined to make from time to time. It's perhaps the only way they have of making their presence here known.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can take all the time. Peter, take it all.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And my colleague from Timmins—James Bay will be speaking to this.

This bill has been time-allocated. You understand that, don't you? The government put the boots to parliamentary process. It imposed the guillotine motion. A bill this extensive, and one that impacts on, as I'm going to address especially, workers' rights in this province, and especially low-paid workers and vulnerable workers—this government is disinclined to want to have this kind of bill debated, and for reasons that are pretty clear, I think, to most Ontarians. Indeed, I would say to the some 24% of Ontarians who don't say that they would like to see another party in power—because, you see, 76% of Ontarians do say it. You recall the poll. Some 76% of Ontarians do say that they want to see another party in power, and 86% of Ontarians, in the same poll, published September 28, 2010 in the *Toronto Star*, say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago.

New Democrats will be voting against Bill 68, and let me make it very, very clear that the provisions in Bill 68, especially those provisions contained in schedule 9 of Bill 68—and if I can help my friends across the road who may not have ventured that far into the bill, schedule 9 begins at page 133 of the bill, as printed for third reading.

It's incredible that this government, with its pathetic record when it comes to protecting workers in this province, would now insist that before workers can avail themselves of any rights under the Employment Standards Act, they first have to address their concerns to their employer, to the bad boss, in the first place. What were these people thinking? Surely the Minister of Labour, at some point after the bill was printed for first reading, or maybe after second reading—and now that the bill is printed for third reading, he must be giving his head one of those smacks and asking how oblivious he, the Minister of Labour, could have been, should have been, must have been to have required vulnerable employees who are being either ripped off by bad bosses, mistreated by bad bosses, exposed to dangerous work situations by bad bosses or simply abused and misused

by bad bosses—exploited by any boss, for that matter—to go to their boss first with their complaint. Well, the reason they have a complaint is because that boss is, *prima facie*, a bad boss.

What do you think happens to vulnerable workers who raise employment standards issues with a bad boss? They don't last very long at those jobs. They get intimidated. They get beat up on. They get bullied. They get smacked around, figuratively and perhaps even literally. So New Democrats are not going to have any role whatsoever to play in participation with any effort—and this is an extreme effort—to diminish workers' rights in the workplace.

0920

I got stuck. It took me a while to get to page 134 of the bill because I was stuck at the title of the bill: An Act to promote Ontario as open for business. Open for business? Down where I come from, where John Deere just shut down—900 jobs; 100-year-old company in the city of Welland; industrial jobs, manufacturing jobs, wealth-creation jobs, value-added jobs. Wealth doesn't come from casinos. Wealth sure as hell doesn't come from high-priced consultants who are ripping off the taxpayer under the umbrella of this Liberal government as they peddle hospitals' favours to ministers and ministerial staff. Wealth comes from working women and men who make things. Open for business? Not where I come from.

God bless Lakeside Steel manufacturing a little bit of pipe, because Lord knows, John Deere is gone, Union Carbide is gone, Atlas Steel is gone, Welland Tube is gone. The largest single employer in the city of Welland right now is a call centre, the Canadian Tire Acceptance centre. Quite frankly—I never thought I'd say this—thank goodness we have them. It's not a unionized workplace; workers are not even covered by workers' compensation, by WSIB. Did you know that, Speaker? These are workers who, in a call centre, suffer a hugely inappropriate level of things like repetitive stress injuries because they're working at desks and they're doing handsets and they're doing keyboarding.

Let me tell you what happens to a 50-year-old woman, because more likely than not it's a woman working in this workplace, who can no longer work because her wrists are gone—she's got carpal tunnel—when she doesn't have workers' compensation coverage. She's done. She's done like dinner. She has been done in. Oh, she could sue but that's highly unlikely, because when she's lost her job because she can't work at it anymore—she doesn't have access to workers' compensation, you see, because this government denies those workers workers' compensation coverage. She can sue if she can put together a hundred grand or so for the high-priced law firm that would be necessary to sue somebody like Canadian Tire Acceptance, because they've got deep pockets and they'll resist any lawsuit. I'm not aware of any lawsuit ever having been filed against them by an injured worker. That's what happens, and this government is oblivious to those working women and men. This government could care less about them.

This government has a disgusting track record when it comes to workers in the province of Ontario. It has an even more disgusting record when it comes to job losses in the province of Ontario: 300,000 jobs lost in the last—what?—three and a half, four years. And these aren't piddling jobs; these aren't double-down-sandwich, Kentucky-Fried-Chicken service jobs, and nothing wrong with the women and men who work in that industry; they work hard for very, very little wages. Three hundred thousand good jobs, mostly unionized jobs, jobs with good wages, good salaries, good pensions, good health packages—those are the kinds of jobs that people work at to send their kids to college and university, because you don't send your kids to college and university when you work at a Tim Hortons, do you, Speaker? It simply doesn't happen.

Open for business? This government has somehow suggested it hired that high-priced team, that high-priced pair, that high-priced duo, Florida and Martin, from the University of Toronto—Lord knows how many tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars they paid them for this sage advice. Remember the advice of Florida and Martin if you lost your job? Open an art gallery or maybe a hairdressing salon. Give me a break. Don't be silly. What a stupid comment made by a couple of boneheaded academic types who are frauds. Officer Bubbles has more sense than they do, and he has a hard time passing anybody's threshold of intelligence or common sense. You lose your job? Open an art gallery. Give me a break. Tell a guy who has been a welder at John Deere for 35 years who loses his job—you see, there was a time down in Niagara when, if you lost your job, you might be able to go work for Casino Niagara. The problem is, Casino Niagara is laying people off now and they're going to be laying more off as this government embarks and follows through on its incredibly dumb and dumber proposition of Internet gambling. No jobs in Internet gambling; all there is is grief and loss.

There was a time when, if you lost your factory job down in Welland, you could go to Niagara College and train as a blackjack dealer. You could train as a slot machine technician and get a job at the casino or at the slots down in Fort Erie. You can't do it anymore, because they're laying people off. Don't you get it? So what do you tell the guy, the 30-year welder from John Deere who just lost his job? The timing is just perfect, because his kids are just about university or college age or just about getting-ready-to-get-married age and need a little boosting hand from their folks—and their folks are expected to be able to give them a little bit of a boost. What are you going to do—put him in a tutu and send him down the road here to dance the ballet with Karen Kain? I don't think so.

This government isn't open for business. This government has shut down business: business after business after business, and job after job after job.

New Democrats will be voting against this legislation. It's bad policy. It's legislation that attacks working women and men, and when you attack working women

and men that means you attack their kids and their parents and their neighbours too, and their communities.

I've got a real hard time—and again, here I am. I've got but a minute left because the government imposed its guillotine motion. The stormtroopers marched in and padlocked the doors to free speech on this one, as they have on a whole lot of other bills over the course of the last seven years, let me tell you. The government has no interest in seeing this bill debated because the government has no interest in being disclosed as it is: as an anti-worker government and an anti-wealth creation government. Not anti-wealth; anti-wealth creation, because oh yes, if you're a high-priced hospital CEO making \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$700,000 a year, or if you're a high-priced, Liberally-connected—Liberal-connected—consultant making a quarter of a million bucks a year or more, charging—what?—\$3,000 for junkets to Singapore—what that has to do with hospital lobbying beats me. It may have more to do with some custom-fitted suits, I suspect.

That kind of wealth, this government endorses. It supports it. It cultivates it, nurtures it. But this government attacks working women and men, attacks retirees, attacks the poor, attacks the unemployed, attacks young people trying to further their education at colleges and universities.

We say no to this bad legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2010, I'm now required to put the question. Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll defer this vote until deferred votes after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to start debate on second reading of Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act.

The House will recall that when we introduced this legislation, we did so to make sure that consumers were treated fairly. That's really what is at the heart of this very streamlined, simple piece of legislation: We want to ensure that consumers are treated, in all respects, fairly. Imagine the situation, if you are a parent, a mom or dad, and there is a great performer who's coming to town, and your kids want tickets. Your kids are absolutely determined to get tickets to the performance. It's what they've always dreamed of, and so you watch to find out when the tickets go on sale. You plan, you rearrange your day and you reschedule. At the very moment the tickets go on sale, you get online or you get on the phone, and there are no tickets. You're referred somewhere else. Instead of a \$100 ticket, you've got a \$300 ticket. Then what do you do? Do you disappoint forever your son or your daughter? Or if it's the son or the daughter, do you disappoint your mother or father? Or do you invest all that extra money for those tickets that are the most important thing in the child's life at the moment?

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Then you find out—guess what? The place you were referred to to buy the higher-priced tickets happens to be commercially connected to the original seller. They had some sort of arrangement so that you were instantly referred from the first or primary seller to the secondary seller to buy tickets at an inflated price over the face value. That's at the heart of the upset of many Ontario consumers.

And it started happening with great regularity. You'd hear regularly about issues which were presented to consumers where they tried to get tickets—they did everything they could to get them online or on the phone—and boom, all the tickets were gone. You'd think to yourself, how could it possibly be that every single ticket in that 5,000-person, 10,000-person, 20,000-person stadium was all of a sudden gone at the regular price, and the only place you can get tickets is at the higher, inflated price? There was just something about that that didn't seem right.

People stood up and said, "Gee, that's not right." Then when they found out that the place they were referred to to buy these inflated-price tickets happened to be connected to the original seller, people got a little upset. And they should. Because at the end of the day, however you describe it in legal language, it isn't fair.

If you want to sell a ticket at a hundred bucks, then people should have a reasonable chance of getting a \$100 ticket. If you want to sell it at \$300, sell it at \$300. Tell everybody it's going to be 300 bucks. If you want to sell it at a thousand, sell it at a thousand. Tell everybody the ticket price is going to be a thousand bucks. But don't tell them you're selling a ticket at 100 bucks and give them no chance to get a \$100 ticket and send them to a seller who's going to sell it at 300 bucks—who happens to be related to the \$100 seller. That's just not right.

You say: Why has this suddenly come to light in the last number of years? The Ticket Speculation Act has been around forever—well, not quite forever, but just

about. Of course, now we have phone banks, we have Internet sales, we have the ability to move transactions in a split second—anywhere in the world. So the advent of technology and the opportunity that some have identified to maximize their own profits have given rise to an unfairness.

At the end of the day, that really is what this legislation is all about. It's not the longest bill you'll ever see in the world. It's not the most complicated bill you'll ever see in the world. But it really is designed to address a rather simple proposition: that primary and secondary sellers shouldn't be commercially related when they're selling the same set of tickets. It's simple. That, at the end of the day, is really what this piece of legislation is all about.

You will recall that a little over a year ago, other jurisdictions jumped up and started doing the same thing. We had in Ontario a Leonard Cohen concert which caused great consternation. In the United States, it was the Boss who was upset about tickets to his concert, and other performers started to—well, you see, the problem is that performers started to hear from the customer. Customers would say that they're fans. They're not customers; they're the fans who say, "Gosh, you know, it's really disappointing. I tried to come and see you and that \$100 ticket became \$300 before you could pronounce your name. It's just not right." They started getting upset and let governments throughout North America know. It just wasn't fair.

So we introduced this piece of legislation. We've had the benefit, over the last year, of making sure that the transactions this legislation will catch are the transactions we want to catch, not every transaction—not a movement between a primary and secondary seller where nobody's profiting, where there's no increased profit. We want to make sure that the transactions that are being caught—given technology, the quick movement and the relationships—are exactly the ones that we want. We've had that year since it was introduced to make sure we can work through some of the issues that were brought to our attention. We will be, if this bill is passed in second reading and goes on to committee, introducing some amendments just to fine-tune a few of the provisions and to make sure that, for example, a movement of tickets from a primary to a secondary seller, where it's for the convenience of the customer and not for profit, is not going to be caught by this particular piece of legislation.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: It's reasonable.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: That's a reasonable change, a reasonable amendment.

Now, as I say, ticket scalping has been illegal in Ontario for some period of time, but when you first started seeing the Internet introduced, in about 1996 or so in terms of selling, it really became a big issue because it shrinks the time where tickets can be transferred from a primary to a secondary seller. It makes it much more commercially attractive to have secondary sellers. Then, of course, as in all things where there is a bit of profit at the end of the day, a behaviour springs up that might not

be illegal but that might strike people as, "Gosh, it's not really fair." That's what we've got here.

The other challenge, of course, with legislation that has been around for a while is that the penalties that exist for those who break its provisions don't always keep pace with the value of the tickets or the commercial enterprise. You don't want a breach of the law to be little more than a licence, so you have to update penalties. You have to make sure that they are consistent with the nature of the profit or the transgression that's at issue. What we've done in this particular piece of legislation is propose the updating of penalties so that there will be a \$5,000 penalty per transaction for an individual and \$50,000 for a corporation. That starts to add up pretty quickly, and takes the profit out of this particular enterprise.

Ultimately, what this legislation would do: It's going to help ensure fair access to tickets for consumers by preventing related primary and secondary ticket sellers—including brokers, including agents—from profiting from secondary sales to the same event. It will make it illegal for a primary seller to limit the number of tickets made available to the public and then divert tickets to the secondary seller to buy the same ticket at a much-inflated price—you know that situation where you've got 5,000 tickets available and you keep 500 at the face price and slide over the other 4,500 to the secondary seller, who can then greatly sell them at an increased price, when the two were related; the primary and the secondary are related.

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It will reassure Ontarians that when they're buying tickets online—and you don't always know who you're dealing with when you're online; there's a lot online these days—the tickets they're buying are not just the profit end point for some corporate enterprise.

As I say, we spent some time in identifying different issues that were brought to our attention about the multiple transactions that could be caught by this legislation. In a lot of them, we said, "Well, yeah, it's supposed to be caught." That's what we're here to do. We're here to change what was becoming the practice.

In fact, to many people—I don't know empirically—it didn't seem to be an exception anymore, when those tickets sort of disappeared as soon as you called or went online, and turned up somewhere else at an inflated price. It didn't seem to be the exception. In fact, it seemed to be the norm. In any economic period, people want to be treated fairly. When the economy is experiencing some worldwide challenges, everybody's watching it a little closer. Fairness: That's what this is about.

More transparency: We were debating earlier today the Open for Business bill. Part of being open for business is being transparent in transactions, and there is an element of that in this particular piece of legislation. Let's be a little more transparent, make sure we're a little more transparent in the way the tickets are being offered for sale to the people of Ontario. That's all. They just want to be treated fairly.

If somebody wants to pay a hundred bucks for a particular performer at a concert, and that's the face price, they'll pay a hundred bucks. Want to pay \$200? They'll pay \$200. What to pay \$300? They'll pay \$300. Some will pay more. But they just want a little bit of access, fair access.

Now, we're going to be listening very carefully to the debate and we'll be looking for opportunities to make sure that transactions aren't identified that you don't want to catch. I have no doubt that some will encourage us not to proceed with this piece of legislation. They'll say that commercial enterprise should be left on its own; the government shouldn't be in the business. Some might tell us that government should not be in the business of ticket sales. I say, we don't want to be in the business of ticket sales, but we are in the business of fairness.

When commercial enterprises have a bit of a history of not doing what many people think is the fair thing to do, governments sometimes have to step in. It's not that we want to; we've got lots of issues. We're working very hard to create a stronger economy, working very hard to deal with the challenges of an economic worldwide recession, working very hard to make sure that the jobs are located here in the province of Ontario as opposed to somewhere else. We've taken big, bold steps in terms of an economic plan, opening up the province, making sure it's completely open for business, making sure our foundation is right.

But you know, fairness is part of a very strong society, and although this is not of the same magnitude of many of those other issues—of course not—it does strike that chord of fairness. And that's just, at the end of the day, what people ask us to do.

I'm looking forward, as I say, to the debate. I'm looking forward to the participation of members of the House. I'm looking forward to suggestions. To those who would tell us not to proceed with this piece of legislation, I say no. The case for fairness has been sufficiently and properly and appropriately made that we need to move on this. There may be others who say, "Oh, gosh, you need to do a lot more." There may be others who say that we need to go much further. In all things, it's a question of balance. It's a question of finding the appropriate degree of intervention, measured by the nature of the activity at issue.

We'll listen very carefully to make sure that we have focused this legislation, directed it to the very issue. It's not a complete reworking of all commercial enterprise. We don't want to do that. It's not an attempt to deal with every issue under the sun. We couldn't do that in the age of the Internet. It's making sure that, to the extent that we're able within the province of Ontario, we support fairness, support that chord that runs through our society of fair dealing, support an appropriate relationship between the seller and the consumers—who are usually the fans or parents of, or sons or daughters of—and that we have made sure that at its heart, the primary seller of a ticket can't be the secondary seller of the ticket to the same event when that secondary sale profits from the

movement of tickets over, benefits from a heightened and increased price in the movement of tickets over. It's as simple as that. It really is as simple as that in the very complicated Internet age.

With that, I thank the members of the House. I look forward to the debate, the comments and the suggestions for improvement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The diversion has begun. Of course, the government has been reeling in the last couple of days with the Auditor General's report, and they've reached into their—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Exactly. They've reached into their little bag of tricks and they've come up with a bill that was introduced on April 29, 2009. Now we're having leadoff speeches some 14 months later—I would say to the table, I can speak a long time but I should have a clock on me—and this is taking place for over 14 months.

During those 14 months, of course, the organizations that are involved in this process have been talking to the government. They have been talking to us as well. They have explained that this bill will do absolutely nothing to solve the problems that the Attorney General has outlined and, in fact, will insert itself into the business of companies carrying on legitimate businesses in Ontario and will have no effect on the consumer.

Why they are proceeding with this bill as it was written, with some flaws, in 2009—it hasn't been changed. Surely the government has learned something about this business over the last 14 or 16 months. None of that is reflected in the bill as it's introduced today.

This bill was so important to the government that it carried it over when the House prorogued, and still the bill comes back in its same form. It's too bad that this bill, which could be important to the people of Ontario, hasn't been written in a form that would make it helpful to the people of Ontario.

The only reason it's being introduced today is that it is seen as consumerism, as a popular bill. The government is very hopeful that it will take the minds of the public off the Auditor General's report, one that, of course, held the government up to a good deal of ridicule when they repeated their mistakes of a year ago with eHealth. Exactly the same thing is happening today in eHealth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll be beginning my one-hour lead on this in due course, perhaps this morning or perhaps the next time it's called. But then again, I'm going to be an old man by the next time it's called, because after all, this bill has been on the order paper for a year and a half—18 months. We served first reading on April 29, 2009. Good God. I still had colour in my hair in 2009. My goodness, this bill has been gathering dust. It's not destined to be called again next week, for instance,

because we're nowhere near finishing the leads on second reading debate this morning.

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But I do find some delight in the Attorney General's references to there being a lot online nowadays. That will allow me, of course, to talk about this government's intention to have a state-operated, state-sanctioned, state-approved Internet gambling system here in the province of Ontario so that 13-year-old kids can be blowing mommy and daddy's credit cards while they're in their bedrooms gambling on the Internet, getting addicted.

I do take some great delight in the Attorney General referencing fairness so much, because that will give me an opportunity to talk about so many things that this government has been doing to people that are oh, so unfair.

But I also make note of this: Here we have a bill that is flimsy. You could read a newspaper through this bill. It's not a weighty bill like this one; it's a flimsy bill. When the Ministry of the Attorney General has weighty bills, why, it's the parliamentary assistant who carries them in this chamber, but when we've got a lightweight bill, it's the Attorney General who carries it. With the heavy bills, he needs the heavy lifting of Mr. Zimmer. With this one, clearly he doesn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise in my place today to speak to An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act.

As the Attorney General so clearly pointed out, a lot of groups across the country and in the US have been jobbing the system. They're in a position of a monopoly on the tickets. It's easy with the new means of getting ticket sales out there, with the Internet etc., that they can take people, and take people very quickly and very often, and keep moving names around.

I think this bill—someone says there's not very much in it. Of course there's not very much in it; it's an amendment that's going to do what Ontario should do to protect people who want to have a fair deal, not only have a few tickets for sale and ship them all out on events where they know it's going to be a sell-out and have somebody reap huge profits. That is not the way we should act in business. I'm glad to see that the fines are going up: \$5,000 for an individual, \$50,000 if the person is a corporation—a fine of not more than \$50,000. Those are the types of fines that will make sure we have honest business and that people in a monopoly position do not steal from fans who want to go to a certain show, that we control this business. It's not the first time; other provinces and other states have been bringing in this legislation. So this will clean up the act. This will make sure that it's fair for people, and I certainly applaud the Attorney General for bringing this in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I listened very carefully to the Attorney General this morning as he so eloquently spoke to

this bill. As my colleagues have said, it has been gathering dust for the last year and a half. I find it disconcerting that the Attorney General would want to be party to wasting our time here this morning discussing this bill when we all have on our desk this morning the special report from the office of the Auditor General in Ontario on consultant use in selected health organizations.

As we read this report, we see that literally multi-millions and billions of dollars are being wasted by hospitals, by LHINs, by the Ministry of Health. As the Attorney General, I would have thought that he would want to use every available moment in this Legislature to condemn what is going on in the health care corridors of this province, not to talk about whether or not someone is selling a ticket to a ball game for another \$20 or \$30 or \$100 more than the face value. Let's talk about where the real scandals are in the halls of this government. That should be the mission of the Attorney General, not to come here and so eloquently address people who are perhaps, yes, scamming someone for \$100. Let's talk about the people who are scamming the people of Ontario for multi-millions under the endorsement of his government. Let's get the priorities of this government straight. I call on the Attorney General to assume his responsibility to oversee how government conducts its business in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Attorney General has two minutes for the response.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank the members for Newmarket–Aurora, Ottawa–Orléans, Welland and Halton for their comments and contributions. I too am looking forward to the debate on the legislation that was introduced yesterday by my colleague the Minister of Health to end the practice, I might say, that was in existence through the government of which my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora was part, and the government before that, and before that, and before that. It's amazing how often issues have been around for decades, where other parties had the ability to change a practice they knew was going on and they sat and did nothing. I guess the question is this: Did they know what was going on; did they not know what was going on—in which case you've got to question what the heck they were doing—or did they know what was going on and decide that it was okay? They'll have the opportunity to participate in the debate on that legislation.

But I want to tell you that I think people should be treated fairly in all their commercial dealings. I'm looking forward to the contributions of the parties opposite, both the official opposition and the third party. Really, I'm looking forward to whether they're going to support the principle of fairness or not. That's what consumers want. If they've got some suggestions to make it stronger, I'd love to hear them. If they've got some suggestions to protect the consumer, I'd love to hear them. If they've got some ways to protect the consumer who doesn't want to get fleeced, I'd love to hear them. But the stall, the delay, the prevarication that we hear coming forward so far, "Oh, it's not going to protect anybody," is the old deflect. No, we proceed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: According to the Attorney General, apparently John A. Macdonald should have changed this regulation to protect consumers against the—but I suppose John A. Macdonald was too busy developing his chain of restaurants to take on that particular task.

This bill, as was pointed out, was introduced on April 29, 2009, some 18 months ago, and has sat gathering dust, and is brought up today primarily because this government is in trouble. It is in trouble with its eHealth 201; we had eHealth 101 last year. We called for public inquiries into how this happened, how a billion dollars in taxpayers' money could disappear into a black hole of consultants, many of them with Liberal-friendly ties. We asked: How can this happen? We wanted a public inquiry into that. "No, no, no," the government said. The Premier apologized and said, "We have to do better."

And what has happened in the year and a half since this bill was introduced? Apparently, the consultants changed their business cards, they changed the letterhead and they continued on in their consulting business, continued on with consulting with LHINs, consulting with the Ministry of Health. They continued on consulting with the hospitals so that hospitals, public agencies, were hiring consultants to represent them when dealing with the government, not providing any front-line health services. It just continued on. If we had had a public inquiry back originally when we were calling for one, June 2009, perhaps a system would have been developed that would have prevented this from happening again—more taxpayer dollars wasted in a sensitive industry like health when government can't find the money to help individual Ontarians. They can't find the money to take action on health issues in Ontario, but they can find the money—hundreds of millions of dollars—to send consultants to Hong Kong, pay them while they're on vacation and pay them for Christmas parties and booze. Something is tragically wrong in the province of Ontario.

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Of course, the government wants to divert the public's attention from these disasters that are happening all around us, so they bring in this act, the act that they want to debate today, Bill 172. As was pointed out by the member from Welland–Thorold, this bill that's being debated this morning is not on the order paper for next week. That in itself should tell the third estate and the fourth estate that the bill is a diversion.

There's no seriousness on the government's behalf to actually debate this bill. They know that this bill will not do one thing, not one thing, to fix the system of ticketing in Ontario. They know how that system works. They know why popular venues sell out almost immediately—within 30 seconds sometimes. They also know that if someone goes online to buy a ticket to the Toronto Maple Leafs when they are playing the Los Angeles Kings, perhaps, quite often they can buy those tickets at much less than face value. They know that in many venues that don't sell out, in Toronto or anywhere else in Ontario,

many of the tickets are sold below face value. They know that's happening.

Last year the Premier said, regarding eHealth, that we had to do better. I don't think bringing this bill back after 18 months of consultations—forced consultations, in many cases—is doing better. But this is the bill that we're going to debate today, and believe it or not, I do intend to talk about the bill.

One of the things that—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This other stuff is more important.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The other stuff is more important, but we should say a few words about the bill in the debate before the Speaker calls me to order in that area.

One of the best articles that I've read on this issue was printed in the National Post. It was printed a year and a half ago, on Tuesday, May 5, 2009. I remember that this bill was introduced on April 29, 2009, so it was written from that perspective, a few days after it was introduced. It was written by Terence Corcoran, who is with the National Post. In my opinion, he's a really great writer, able to capsulize and identify issues very succinctly. He starts out by saying, "Too little attention was paid last week as Ontario's Attorney General did what governments do best: Pander to public perception"—a very powerful way to start an article. He also correctly used a colon in that sentence. It's something that we don't see an awful lot in our newspapers anymore: proper punctuation. My hat's off to Mr. Corcoran, who uses it correctly—"Seems like no issue is too small and no public misconception so stupid or wrong that it cannot be answered with legislation or regulation." He capsulizes the exact problem: that Premier Dad is coming to the rescue, but to no avail. Nothing is too small that it can't be fixed with regulation or legislation.

"And so Attorney General Chris Bentley, answering the call of the blogosphere, last Wednesday introduced Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. The bill, aimed at Ticketmaster, is designed to fix a perceived problem that doesn't exist based on an analysis that is flawed with a law that doesn't do anything to fix the perception or respond to the flawed analysis. In government and politics, that's called productive work."

I told you this guy was a good writer. So far, in two paragraphs, he has basically said it all.

"The perception is that Ticketmaster, an agency hired by rock groups, sports teams and others to handle ticket sales, is taking preferential advantage of its position and transferring tickets to its secondary market subsidiary, TicketsNow, where they are marked up to sky-high prices." That's the perception.

"The fact that there is no evidence that Ticketmaster favours its TicketsNow subsidiary is more or less acknowledged right in the government's Bill 172 press release. 'The new provisions respond to public concern that companies may make tickets available for sale to the same events on the primary market and then on the secondary market, at a much higher price.'"

In Ticketmaster's press release on the subject, they specifically say that they do not transfer tickets from

Ticketmaster to TicketsNow. In introducing this bill, I suppose the government is calling the company untruthful, if I can use that word. The fact that there's no evidence that Ticketmaster favours its TicketsNow subsidiary is more or less acknowledged right in the government's press release.

"Public concern about something is not a basis for legislation, especially when the legislation does nothing to alleviate the concern and may, in the end, make the local concert/sports events ticket-pricing situation worse." This legislation could make the situation worse. "The new law also undermines competition in the ticket-selling business. Why would the government want to do that?" Why would the government want to undermine the competitive situation that exists in the market today?

He continues: "The bill, in two pages, amends existing Ontario law that supposedly bans scalping in event tickets. Specifically, it would prohibit a primary seller (i.e. Ticketmaster) from dealing in the same tickets as a secondary seller (i.e. TicketsNow)," its subsidiary. "The minister doesn't explain what the effect is of this change in the law, except to claim that it will return 'fairness' to the ticket market and 'protect consumers.'"

"The government by now knows that the public perception is wrong. Or if it has doubts, it also knows that the federal Competition Bureau is investigating this public perception. The least Mr. Bentley could do is wait for the Competition Bureau to report."

The Competition Bureau has reported, and it finds nothing wrong with the existing system. The Competition Bureau, of course, is another branch of government, and it finds nothing wrong.

"The most famous example of alleged ticket manipulation is a Bruce Springsteen concert in New Jersey, where TicketsNow appeared to have tickets even before they were available at Ticketmaster. Not only is it the most famous example, it is the only example, and one which Ticketmaster says was due to a local computer malfunction. If Ticketmaster had prematurely sold Springsteen tickets via TicketsNow, it would have been in breach of its contract with the Springsteen promoters." That's something that no one in the ticket distribution business would want to do. That could destroy their business overnight, and they are market leaders in that area.

"It is now conventional wisdom in the blog world, on radio call-in shows and in the newsrooms of the Toronto Star and the CBC that Ticketmaster scalps its own products to TicketsNow. Ticketmaster's legal counsel, Joe Freeman, calls it an 'urban myth.' Still, on CBC Radio's *As It Happens* last week"—this would be in May 2009—"host Carol Off belligerently went after Mr. Freeman for having the temerity to deny Ticketmaster's complicity in the ticket-scalping market." Urban myths: They're hard to do away with.

1010

"The concert and sport-event ticket business is becoming increasingly complicated and sophisticated, thanks to the Internet. Tickets for everything can be found with a simple Google search and a willingness to pay prices well above the official price.

"In Toronto, primary sellers include Ticketmaster, the Toronto Blue Jays, the Mirvish theatre group and others. Secondary players include StubHub, TicketNorth, Ticket-Liquidator, Ticket Express, GoTickets and others. Ticketmaster is the only primary seller that owns a secondary seller. The Ontario legislation effectively singles out Ticketmaster and would prevent it from operating in the secondary market, where it essentially acts as an Internet-based broker between buyers and sellers. The real money is made by the scalpers and traders. TicketsNow collects a fee on transactions, but does not own or control any tickets."

Understand what he's saying: I have a ticket that I find that I can no longer use. I put it on TicketsNow. TicketsNow provides the sales organization to find another buyer. The other buyer buys the ticket off the Internet. TicketsNow guarantees that that is, indeed, a legitimate ticket to the event that the buyer expects to attend. You can imagine the fraud that takes place on the Internet: people buying tickets that don't exist; people buying tickets that have no legitimacy. They show up at the gate—"Sorry, that ticket's no good." There's all kinds of money that disappears by the illegitimate sale of tickets. TicketsNow guarantees that you're buying a legitimate ticket. That's their business, and they take a percentage of that. They don't own tickets themselves. So this whole bill is badly, badly flawed in that area.

The Attorney General—he refers to "Mr. Bentley," if I can use that name. I'm reading; I'm not referring to the member: "Mr. Bentley apparently doesn't believe Ticketmaster. Otherwise, why would he bring in a law that effectively bars Ticketmaster from competing in the secondary market? No doubt the owners of StubHub and scores of other Internet-based scalping agencies are going to be happy."

Most of these agencies that sell tickets are indeed selling them above face value, and under this law that's illegal. But this government doesn't seem to have a lot of problems dealing with companies that do illegal things, or agencies or, indeed, people who do illegal things in Ontario. I give you the illegal tobacco business in Ontario, where close to 50%, if not in excess of 50%, of the tobacco that's sold in Ontario is of an illegal nature. We do not collect taxes on it. There's probably \$1.5 billion from all levels of government going down the drain when we are not collecting that money. Those cigarettes are being sold illegally across Ontario. Grade 8 students can find a van to buy cigarettes out of, but apparently the government can't find the van to charge those people with the illegal sale of cigarettes. The illegal cigarettes come out of known locations, the Six Nations reserve, for one. They come out in tractor-trailers. The government knows which road they're coming out on, but they don't seem to be able to catch those people coming out with a tractor-trailer full of illegal cigarettes. I guess it's because they just don't care. And here we are scalping tickets across the Internet, knowing buyer and knowing seller. It's illegal, but the government just doesn't care.

"All of this is taking place under an existing law that makes scalping illegal. The amendment, in other words,

will prevent Ticketmaster from engaging in an activity that the law already officially prohibits but does not stop. It's tough to explain, but it's what people want, the minister says. 'Ontarians have spoken out clearly, resoundingly and unequivocally against companies benefiting from the primary and secondary markets.'"

Mr. Corcoran concludes his article by saying, "I give up."

Well, we on this side of the House are not going to give up. We are going to continue the good fight. We are going to continue to bring to light the misconceptions, the way in which this government operates, why they're bringing in this diversionary bill this week: to try and cover up the massive waste of money that we've seen in eHealth 201, the next stage of the eHealth saga; the sequel. Even the government has sequels to its scandals. I think when a government has sequels to its scandals, it's no wonder 76% of Ontarians think that it's time for a change.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to welcome in the east gallery two of my staff today: Elaine Palmateer, my executive assistant, and my brand new staff of about two months, Megan Forest. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to introduce on behalf of page Emmett Bisbee his mother, Debbie Bisbee, sister Avery Bisbee and grandparents Grahame Bennett, Joan Bisbee and Bob Bisbee in the members' gallery.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have the pleasure of introducing three guests of mine from Simcoe county: Lacey Robson, who's shadowing me today, from Orillia; and Jane Binns and Louise Pope, all here in the members' gallery.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to introduce Darryl Demille from my riding. I wanted to introduce him to the Premier, but the Premier is not here again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We welcome the guests, but I do remind the honourable member about making references to absences.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Wow, that didn't take long. We haven't even started question period.

I remind the honourable members of the practice within this chamber. None of us know why a member may not be here, and we do not make references to members' attendance.

Further introductions?

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery the German-Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group from the German Bundestag, led by Mr. Klaus-Peter Flosbach. They

are accompanied by the consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Toronto, Mrs. Sabine Sparwasser. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario families want to know: Where is Premier McGuinty and why is he hiding from what the auditor says in his report on eHealth 2.0? They saw McGuinty Liberals hand out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants during the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. You changed the rules—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The reference that the honourable member just made certainly did cause disorder in the House, either directly or indirectly, by making reference to a member's attendance in this chamber. If it has the ability to cause disorder, I would just ask the honourable member to refrain from making references. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: They saw the McGuinty Liberals hand out sweetheart deals to Liberal-friendly consultants in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

You changed the rules; that didn't work. You changed ministers; that didn't work. Why is the only way to bring about real change to bring in a new government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's going to be one of those mornings, so let's get started.

I think what's very important is that people perhaps watching at home understand what has transpired over the last some time. Under our government, the Auditor General was given expanded powers. One of those expanded powers was to shine a light into what was going on in hospitals, in stark contrast to what was happening when the previous government had their chance. We shone a light; they covered up. We specifically asked the Auditor General to go in and take a look. "Give us your best advice, Auditor General," we said. "What can we do? What's going on with respect to consultants and lobbyists in our hospitals and in our LHINs?"

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: People are seeing what's happening out there and they don't like it. We looked at the auditor's eHealth report and we looked at his eHealth 2.0 report. They say the same thing.

On page 13 of the eHealth report, the auditor said, "Sound and reasonable policies were in place ... but all too often the rules were not followed." On page 8 of this year's report, he says, "We noted far too many instances at the hospitals we visited where sound public sector business practices were not followed...."

Minister, why did you say you fixed things when you didn't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I think the member opposite knows but isn't prepared to acknowledge is that when her party was in power—they had eight years in power when they refused to shine a light into the hospitals. They would not give the Auditor General the power to look at hospitals.

We changed that, and when we changed that, we knew that the Auditor General would find things that needed improving. He did not disappoint us. It's why we asked him to go in. He gave us recommendations, and the very same day we introduced legislation that addresses each and every one of those recommendations.

When you have the responsibility of government, you can make a choice. You can choose to cover up, to keep things in the dark, or you can choose to shine the light and make the changes that people expect us to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member of the use of unparliamentary language within this chamber. Again, it's similar to—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford, I would appreciate it that when I'm taking an opportunity to address all members of this House, that everyone would listen to what I have to say.

It's very similar to the comment that I made earlier about making references to attendance. Any time there is language used within this chamber that has the opportunity to cause disorder in this House, I'd just ask the honourable members to use the words cautiously.

Final supplementary.

1040

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On page 11 of last year's report, the auditor said, "Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding ... contracts are ... true." A year later, he says: "The Ministry of Health ... found a way around the rules when it wanted to hire a favoured consultant ... we essentially felt the fix was in...."

The only difference between eHealth and eHealth 2.0 is that the problem is closer to the minister this time around. The auditor says the cheating was by her ministry, not an agency. Why would Ontario families believe new rules make a difference when the auditor keeps saying the McGuinty Liberals don't follow them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would recommend that the member opposite actually not try to put words in the mouth of the Auditor General. He can speak for himself. I think that it's only respectful of that position that we quote him responsibly and accurately.

We on this side of the House have made decisions since the very first—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member from Lanark to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have taken step after step after step to strengthen accountability, to increase

transparency. The legislation we introduced yesterday is the next step.

My question is, are we going to get the support from the party opposite for these improvements?

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again for the Minister of Health: Last year's eHealth report and this year's eHealth 2.0 report are not the only things the same about this year's and last year's scandals. We looked at what you said when your hand was caught in the cookie jar last year and what you say now. It's the same too.

At his press conference last year, Premier McGuinty said: "We have ended practices carried on for decades." In your press conference yesterday, speaking to the Minister through you, Mr. Speaker, you said: "This is a practice that has been going on far too long, and we are ending it."

Why would Ontario families believe what you say about ending sweetheart deals when the auditor says you didn't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really do think that this is a bit rich, coming from the party opposite. When it comes to the use of consultants, for example—I'm sure the party opposite knows this, but let me just remind them if they don't. We have cut in half the spending on consultants. You left us with spending on consultants that was twice what we spend today.

I think it's important to note that the auditor has confirmed the non-partisan nature of the contracts that were let, so if we're going to quote the auditor, I think it's important that we actually quote the auditor. He says party politics did not enter into the awarding of these contracts: "We did not see any evidence that it was awarded on the basis of party politics."

We are continuing to improve transparency. When you improve transparency—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It seems that the Premier is not only recycling his scandals but his PR schemes to manage them too. Last year, he thanked the auditor for his report and said: "It's unacceptable." A year after the consulting contract feeding frenzy at eHealth, your line on the exact same thing going on in hospitals, LHINs and your own ministry is to thank the auditor for his report and say, "I don't think this is acceptable."

You had a year. Ontario families keep hearing you say that you can do better. Why don't you actually do better?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to health care, I think Ontario families may be interested in the contrast between their record and our record. Let me just remind the people opposite: Under their government, 6,200 nurses fired; under our government, 10,000 nurses hired. Under their leadership, 28 hospitals closed; under our leadership, 18 new hospitals opened. Under their government, they actually took—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Member from Halton. Member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West should be in his seat—and the member from Renfrew.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Under their watch, they—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

I'd just remind all members that I realize this is an issue that is important to members on both sides of the House, but we have an important role to play within this chamber, and I would ask all members to participate in that.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Under the opposition's watch, they changed the FOI laws to exclude Hydro One and OPG. What did we do? We reversed their decision and opened up Hydro One to FOI. Now we are opening up freedom of information to hospitals if our legislation is passed. Their last year in office, this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The reason why Ontario families want change is because the McGuinty Liberals are like a broken record. You changed the rules, but that didn't work. You changed the ministers, but that didn't work. Ontario families understand that if their car still isn't fixed after the mechanic said he fixed it for the 10th time, they should change the mechanic. The same applies to you.

If Premier McGuinty is listening to all of this, I'll ask this question: If you can't change, then why shouldn't Ontario families change and elect a PC government that will bring back front-line health care instead of electing all their Liberal friends and giving consulting contracts to them?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: They didn't get their Mc-Breakfast.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): At this rate, nobody's getting lunch.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have spent the last seven years that we have been in government cleaning up the mess that that party left behind when it came to health care. When we took office, people could not get a family doctor in my community or in communities across this

province. When they left office, people were waiting two years for cataract surgery, for hip replacement surgery—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford will come to order. Simcoe North, come to order. Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, come to order.

New question.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday's report by the Auditor General reveals insiders bilking hospitals for bar tabs and vacations while women with breast cancer lost nurses; and hospitals closed emergency rooms. But does the Acting Premier think that we've actually been given the full story?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, that's kind of an astonishing question, I have to say. We were the ones who gave the Auditor General the responsibility to go in and look. We asked him specifically to look at this issue.

If the member opposite is suggesting that the Auditor General did not do his job thoroughly, I can tell you that I cannot support the premise of that question. I have tremendous respect for the auditor. He gave us some very good recommendations. We introduced legislation yesterday to address all of them. My question is, will you support the recommendations of the Auditor General?

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The scathing report found a misuse of precious public health dollars at every one of the 16 hospitals examined; 16 out of 16 hospitals were okay with consultants expensing trips to Singapore and \$200 bar tabs. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. Can the minister tell Ontarians what was happening at all the other hospitals across this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General, first of all, now has the power, which he did not have before we came to office, to look at hospitals. He has done exactly what he was requested to do by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and he has raised some very serious issues—practices that are going on in hospitals—that are simply unacceptable. I am convinced by the Auditor General's report that these are not isolated incidents, that there are problems in our hospital sector, that people in hospitals are not taking responsibility the way we need them to. They are spending taxpayer dollars.

People are feeling very stretched. They're having a very difficult time making ends meet. They pay their taxes with the expectation that they get service for those dollars, that they get value for the money. That's why we are fixing the problem; that's why we have introduced legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General's report has rolled back the lid but we need to blow it off. Precious health dollars were supposed to support women struggling with breast cancer, to run emergency rooms that are now closing, to pay nurses and personal support workers, to help people who are unwell in this province. Instead, that money flowed into the pockets of well-connected consultants and lobbyists at 16 out of 16 hospitals.

Will the minister now use her power under the Auditor General Act and immediately order a comprehensive review of all hospitals in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the Auditor General did a very fine and thorough job. He shone the light on practices that are unacceptable. I have spoken to hospital CEOs and board chairs. I made it very clear to them that they have a responsibility to go through their budgets to understand the practices that are happening in their hospitals.

I can tell you that the response from hospitals and from the Ontario Hospital Association has been encouraging; they acknowledge that they have a lot of work ahead of them. We will ensure that they comply with the legislation, if indeed we pass that legislation. I do hope that members opposite will support this legislation.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. Ontario families who are losing ERs while well-connected consultants spend their health dollars on exotic vacations and drinks deserve some answers. Will the Acting Premier give us full disclosure on exactly which consultants were highlighted in the Auditor General's report yesterday?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Enhancing transparency and accountability is a hallmark of this government. I have to say that I am extremely proud of the steps we have taken. For example, the Auditor General will provide a report on the state of our finances so that, unlike under previous administrations, the taxpayers will know what kind of shape the province is in before they go into an election. Transparency, publicly reporting expenses and reporting on the use of consultants are all components of the legislation that we introduced yesterday. We are taking a big step forward when it comes to transparency. We are giving oversight under freedom of information to hospitals. Opening up hospitals to freedom of information is a very big and important step forward. The—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Trips to Singapore, vacations to Japan, \$200 bar tabs, and \$210,000 salaries for a four-day work week are some of the glaring examples of our precious health care dollars that should have been spent running ERs and hiring nurses. But the problem can't be fixed without all the facts, so when will the minister pull

off the cover and let Ontario families know the names of all of the consultants who cashed in on our health care dime?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have taken a very significant step. We have introduced legislation yesterday that will improve transparency and expand accountability. It will strengthen our health care system.

I do want to remind the member opposite that when her party was in power—I know it was a long time ago, but nonetheless, successive governments have not taken the step that we have taken today. We are taking a step that will shine more light on the practices that are unacceptable. The Auditor General has done an exceptional job for us. We thank him for that work. We responded immediately, and I do think that all of us need to understand that this is a significant step forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While families lost their ERs, while women with breast cancer lost their nurses, while patients waited in closets for the emergency room doctor to have a chance to see them, money that should have gone to making people well instead went to cover the bar tabs of well-connected insider consultants. This is really the last straw for Ontario families who have had enough of this tired and out-of-touch government. Families don't want more empty promises; what families simply want is the facts.

When will the minister reveal the names of the consultants making these outrageous claims and order a comprehensive audit of all health care consultant spending?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm just going to read something that the member opposite might find of interest: "That the Provincial Auditor should have a duplicate role of going in after they've already been audited to do it all over again to make sure that proper policy has been followed ... I say is wrong. It is not the job of the auditor to determine what public policy should be and how it's being followed."

Interjection: Who wrote that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Who wrote that?

Interjection: Who said that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Gilles Bisson.

I have another quote. I think that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member of the use of names.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That was the member for Timmins when, in fact, that party was in government. That party refused to open up hospitals to freedom of information when they had the chance. Our government is doing exactly that.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Steve Clark: The McGuinty Liberals can say what they like about accountability, but the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To whom?

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Acting Premier—but the Premier hasn't yet uttered a peep about the Auditor General's eHealth 2.0 report. He certainly hasn't been a model of accountability in facing this House. I was at the same press conference the Premier was at this morning and I made it back to the House, because—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed for five minutes.

The House recessed from 1059 to 1106.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I've had to remind members on a number of occasions today about making references to members' attendance. I think we need to be cognizant of the fact, and I'm going to remind you again, that we often don't know why a member is or is not here. During the recess, I was reminded of an occasion in this House where a member in opposition was making repeated references to a cabinet minister of the day not being in attendance. Subsequent to those numerous references being made, the member was made aware that that cabinet minister was at a hospital attending to her son. We don't know the reasons, but I think we need to be cognizant that there may be circumstances in people's day-to-day lives so that they cannot be here.

I'll say to members that I've reminded them a number of times today about making those references to attendance. If it happens again, I'm just going to pass to the next question, no questions asked—and that's a warning to everyone. That warning holds true as well from the standpoint of just walking back into the chamber right now and making references. If you want to make those comments, go outside the chamber and make them, but don't make them in here, because we all recognize that it does disrupt the flow of the House.

With that, I'm going to ask the member from Leeds-Grenville to get to his question, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm here in the House and I will address my question to the Acting Premier. When will the Premier of the province of Ontario take accountability in this House for the eHealth 2.0 report?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to accountability and transparency, we will not be taking any lessons whatsoever from the party opposite. Their record is very, very clear, and so is ours. We are the party that has strengthened accountability, that has strengthened transparency; that is the party that refused to take the steps to shine the light on practices that were going on.

They have had some advice for us. We have had advice that we perhaps send a memo. We're going much farther than that: We are taking action. We have introduced legislation. We are hoping that we will have support for that legislation.

The member from Nepean-Carleton introduced legislation. She thinks it's pretty fabulous. I tell you, it does not ban the practice of hiring lobbyists with taxpayer dollars to lobby for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Minister, but you're talking to me. I'm asking you a question. The question was about when the Premier—who hasn't uttered a peep in this House about the Auditor General's eHealth 2.0 report. I want to know, why should Ontario families believe that there won't be an eHealth 3.0? Answer that question.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we've said many times in this House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Lanark, I don't need the advice of others in the House. I'd just remind the honourable member that you should be in your seat.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that has expanded transparency precisely so that we can find out what is going on and take the right action to address those issues. That's exactly what happened here. Under their watch, there was nobody looking, there was nobody watching, but that didn't stop the Auditor General from actually finding some things that were going on under their watch.

On page 25, he says, "In early 1999"—remember that? That's under your watch—"the hospital single-sourced a contract, which has been in continued operation since that time.... Total costs paid to the firm have amounted to about \$60 million"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. After the Auditor General acted upon my motion and exposed that precious health care dollars were padding the pockets of high-priced lobbyists and consultants under McGuinty's watch, how can the government expect Ontarians to trust our health care system?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know that the member opposite has a job to do as my critic and I expect her to do that job, but what I do not expect her to do, particularly someone with such a strong background in health care, is to play politics with this issue.

The Auditor General's report exposed practices that are unacceptable, exposed practices that do not respect taxpayer dollars. I'm not going to defend anything that the Auditor General revealed, but to suggest that somehow Ontarians ought not to have trust or confidence in their health care system is completely irresponsible. Ontarians can have absolute confidence in their health care system. They can have absolute confidence in the quality of care that they are getting. We have an excellent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We're talking about money that was taken away from people who are sick. We're talking about money that was taken away from people who needed care. That's because their government failed them.

The Auditor General himself said that he's surprised that eHealth had not been the wakeup call for hospitals to tighten up their procedures. It is clear that despite scandal after scandal and three health ministers since I've been here, this government has not been able to ensure that precious health care dollars go to health care. Yesterday's report is just the latest example of a government failing on the job.

Why does this government continue shaking up Ontarians' trust in our health care system by letting lobbyists profit on the backs of sick people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, we introduced legislation yesterday to address the issues raised by the Auditor General. I was astonished to hear the member opposite yesterday—perhaps she was misquoted. I think the member yesterday called this legislation, which addresses the recommendations of the Auditor General—they were characterized yesterday by this member as worthless.

You can't have it both ways. You can't on one hand criticize and then call the legislation that addresses those worthless. So what is it? Are they playing politics with this or are they genuinely interested in improving health care in this province?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Our province, like many other jurisdictions around the world, has felt the negative effects of the recent global economic downturn. Ontario's automotive sector was particularly affected by the recession, and employment in this sector fell dramatically. But our province is now emerging from the recession. We have seen progress in a number of industries as workers are being called back to the job and production is ramping up to meet a growing demand for Ontario-made goods.

What role, if any, has the Ontario government played in ensuring the long-term viability of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to speak on behalf of the automotive industry of Ontario, and in particular the member for Ajax-Pickering, a long-time defender of the automotive industry, and, in Oshawa, GM, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda—and we are delighted that so many on our side of the House are in fact defenders of the automotive industry. When other parties in this House turned their backs on the automotive industry when they needed help, the Ontario government, under the Liberal leader, Dalton McGuinty, was there for the automotive industry.

Today, as a result of that support, we know that GM, for example, in Oshawa—in this member's backyard—is

rehiring 600 people to take care of more demand for the Equinox, more demand for GM product, and we're delighted to see that. And let me say that this simply would not have happened had we listened to opposition members of this House who at that time chose to call our support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to thank the minister for her response. It has had a positive impact in my area of Durham region and all of Ontario. It is encouraging to hear just how dedicated this government has been to the long-term viability of the province's auto industry and its workers.

The examples that the minister provided in the first part of my question were compelling. However, little to no mention of support for automotive innovation was made. In order for our province to continue as a global auto leader, our industry must be able to keep up with the ever-changing demands of the consumer.

I was involved with the announcement with the minister in Oshawa which demonstrates our government's support for automotive innovation. The Ontario government, along with a number of partners, announced the unveiling of the Automotive Centre of Excellence. My question is, will we provide this House with further examples of how this government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I was in fact delighted to be with this particular member at UOIT just on Monday, where we could bring industry together to look at the significant Ontario government investment in this facility. In fact, the Automotive Centre of Excellence, as this member well knows—\$80 million from the Ontario government, supporting innovation for the entire automotive industry, for green industries, for aerospace and all of those industries looking for places to do that research. UOIT now has a tremendous facility.

This is in great contrast to the opposition members who, quite frankly, did not support the automotive industry when they needed help the most, when they called it "corporate welfare." In the meantime, even your colleague in the Ajax-Whitby area, whose own campaign manager chose to take money as a lobbyist—that in fact wasn't corporate welfare, but their support of automotive, they refused to give, so we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The government has repeatedly failed to meet its own deadlines on the release of the affordable housing strategy report. It was supposed to be delivered last June. There are now 142,000 families waiting an average of 10 to 12 years for affordable housing. This is the worst record in Ontario's history.

Will the minister give us the actual date this report will be released?

1120

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member from Parkdale-High Park should know that since 2003, we have committed more than \$2.5 billion toward the sector. This is helping us build and repair well over 200,000 units across the province and deliver more than 35,000 rent supplements. She should know that we are the first government in Ontario to come forward with a long-term affordable housing strategy, which will be out later this year. She should understand that we inherited a mess from two previous governments; that we are now repairing the mess that was left by two previous governments.

We are dedicated to making a difference in affordable housing. We will continue to work toward this strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister's words are cold comfort to the 142,000 families who are facing homelessness this winter.

Just two days ago, there was a mass demonstration at the Ministry of Housing by Ontarians demanding the release of the affordable housing strategy report. They pointed out that there was not even a line item for housing when the government announced its budget for the year. No money for housing? No wonder there's no housing strategy.

I ask again: Give us the exact date of when the housing strategy report will be released.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Actually, the demonstration that was out in front of 777 Bay Street was all about getting the federal government involved in a long-term affordable housing strategy. I stood up in this House and said I support that. I believe the federal government should get involved in the long-term affordable housing strategy.

I'd love to be able to compare records. When the NDP were in power, there was no affordable housing strategy in place. In fact, if anything, there was a diminishing of importance with regard to affordable housing. That's not the case here. We've made \$2.5 billion worth of investment in affordable housing. We will continue to ensure that we work on a long-term affordable housing strategy that is in place in the timeline that the Premier said makes sense, unlike what previous governments have done.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Fire safety is something everybody thinks about. We worry about our homes, our families and the best way to stay safe from fire. It's especially true for seniors and those vulnerable persons who have difficulty caring for themselves. I hear about these concerns from constituents all the time. They and I have seen several fires in residences for vulnerable Ontarians over the years. Some have resulted in fatalities.

I know our government has enhanced fire safety regulations on a number of fronts, but I also know a lot more can be done. Minister, what are we doing to protect those most at risk from fire here in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's a very important question and one that has been before this House on many occasions. This government has heard from organizations across Ontario, experts in the fire sector, those who live in and manage vulnerable care homes, municipalities and others, that more needs to be done. That's why today we announced that we are launching extensive consultations on how to improve fire safety in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. We recognize there are a number of ways to move forward and a number of different aspects to consider, so we're seeking advice from residents, their families and organizations, including fire services, municipalities, facility owners and operators, and associations, that play important roles in ensuring the safety of these individuals. This advice will help the government to determine our next steps to enhance fire safety in vulnerable care homes, such as with fire sprinklers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: My constituents in Willowdale, and indeed everybody in Ontario, will be happy that we're moving forward on this file. But there is no single thing that will fix the issue of fire safety. There needs to be a comprehensive approach put in place in order to protect Ontarians.

There are a number of organizations in my riding, Willowdale, that work with vulnerable Ontarians, and I feel that they really want to contribute to these consultations. I've also heard generally from those living in retirement and long-term-care homes that they want their voices heard in this consultation process. Minister, quite specifically, how can these people have a say in this consultation process?

Hon. James J. Bradley: We're going to be posting a consultation document for comment. We're going to seek the views and concerns of all our fire safety industry partners, including all the organizations to which I made reference. We're pleased that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Ontario Retirement Communities Association, among others, have expressed their enthusiasm about this important step forward.

Following the receipt of all submissions made during the consultation, we plan to release a document outlining what we have heard, and we're wide open to all suggestions that will help us drive the best plan to address and improve fire safety in residences housing vulnerable Ontarians. We look forward to that input.

I want to pay tribute to MPP Jeffrey, MPP Sergio, MPP Miller and MPP Craiton, who have all brought forward private members' bills on this particular issue. I think that, together as members of the Legislature, we'll be able to bring about something that is going to make a measurable difference—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. The auditor's report is not just about hospital lobbying contracts. On page 8 of the report, the auditor says he found two cases where the Ministry of Health gave "preferred treatment" to higher-priced consultants, yet you are trying to make hospitals scapegoats when, especially after eHealth, you had to have known what was happening within your own ministry.

How can you expect hospitals to follow rules that you are not following yourself?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have made significant change. We have improved transparency and accountability. Because of action that this government has taken, the auditor has the power to go in and expose these practices, which are unacceptable.

This did not start under our watch. Every party represented in this House bears some responsibility for not having made the changes that we are now making. Let me refer to the Auditor General's report again. He raises several contracts that actually started back in the 1990s, when they were in power. On page 28, he says, "At one hospital, a consultant has been engaged since 1999 as the chief executive officer." The contract was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's time for this government to assume responsibility. They've been there for seven years. This is why Ontario families want change.

Yesterday, the auditor said, "One thing the minister does set is the culture, what I call the tone from the top." The culture you've created is blaming the rules constantly and passing the buck. A year after the former health minister was thrown under the bus to shield George Smitherman from accountability, the auditor says on page 12 of his report that the rot is also in your own ministry. He found that the ministry awarded a half-million-dollar contract to a consultant even though it had submitted the highest of 12 bids.

Why is accountability greater when an agency is caught short-changing Ontario families than when it is your own ministry who is cheating Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think if the member opposite actually thought about it, she would know that these are practices that have gone on far too long under all governments.

It is our government that is taking action. Her party thought we should send a memo; our party thinks we need to pass legislation. Her party thought that you could improve accountability and not ban lobbyists; we think we need to ban lobbyists from using taxpayer dollars.

These are practices that have gone on for far too long under governments of all stripes. We have asked the Auditor General to give us advice. We are acting on that advice. We have introduced legislation. I genuinely hope,

and ask the member opposite: Will you support this legislation?

1130

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families across Ontario are being squeezed by higher and higher hydro bills. Margaret Risdon from Elliot Lake writes: "I live in a two-bedroom apartment in northern Ontario. I just dread to think what my bills are going to be this winter."

With winter coming, how soon can Ms. Risdon expect her government to give her a break by taking the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess I'm still waiting to see if the leader of the third party puts in her newsletter all the good news about the energy and property tax credit that's going to help that very constituent. But maybe she doesn't want that constituent to know.

I guess the question I have is why, day after day, the leader of the third party gets up in her place to oppose the important investments that we're making in our energy system, important investments that are shared in creating jobs right across this province.

I'd like to quote from the United Steelworkers. They said, about an announcement that the Premier was at with them just a couple of days ago: "Today's announcement is doubly good news.... More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need. And helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids, too."

The quote goes on, and I have a feeling I may want to expand on that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ms. Risdon isn't alone in worrying about paying her hydro bill. Mary D. from Sarnia writes this: "We have noticed on our last payment for hydro our bill has increased by approximately \$100."

Mary LeBlanc, the mother of a child with special needs, also from Sarnia, writes: "Just got my hydro bill last week and nearly had a heart attack ... another \$40 in HST!"

How much longer will Mary and her family have to wait before this government finally gives them a break and takes the HST off of their hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There was a time in this province when the NDP used to stand for something. It's becoming very obvious now that those principles that they once possessed, those principles that required investments in energy to ensure that we could move from a dirty system of energy to a clean system of energy, investments that are creating jobs across this province—they have lost their way. They no longer support those investments.

I ask the member, because I know she's vaguely familiar with the steelworkers of Ontario, who I think once used to be very close to her—no longer, because this is what they're saying: "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels,

workers can support their families by working in clean energy.... Workers in other countries know this is the economy of tomorrow. More Ontario workers know clean energy will power our economy, too."

It's a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In recent months, we've heard much about municipal election campaigns all across Ontario and the way they inspire us and get us to work to elect more and more people, and mostly to get people involved in the democratic process.

In the western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, I am aware of an initiative by our province and a variety of other groups to immerse more people into how government and the democratic process work. Called Local Government Week, the program engages students in processes similar to that of municipal elections.

Would the minister outline what Local Government Week is and why this event is so important to the democratic process in Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think every member in this House will agree that the democratic process is very good and worth teaching. That's why Local Government Week is all about informing our students about the importance of government. This year, we're combining Local Government Week with Student Vote, an initiative whereby students will hold parallel elections.

For example, in Sudbury tomorrow I'll be at St. Benedict secondary school with principal Karl Dreger and vice-principal Judi Way. I'll be with the 600 students who will be having a parallel election. In Sudbury, 18 schools are participating and 4,300 kids are going to be voting in this parallel election.

I encourage everybody in the House to get their communities involved. Get those students involved. As our Premier has said, the students are the foundation of Ontario's society tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Newcomers and multi-generation Ontarians alike need their government to take an active approach and reach out to Ontarians to encourage greater participation in local politics.

The first step in making a difference in one's community is getting involved in democratically selecting the men and women who represent you. We all represent the many municipalities that make up Ontario because we took an interest in improving life in our communities.

Minister, I understand that many schools are participating in Local Government Week. Would you tell the House how many schools are participating in the program and describe the topics being discussed in Ontario classrooms during this year's Local Government Week?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I am delighted to report to this House that there are 1,500 elementary and secondary schools participating this week in this initiative. I'm also happy that the Ministry of Education has been able to provide \$100,000 for this initiative.

Of course, it's important to remember that this is only possible when the elected representatives within communities make themselves available to go into the schools and talk to students. I think it's important that we recognize and thank them for their contribution but also for understanding why it is so important that we touch our young students, the future electors of the province of Ontario, and have them understand the kinds of services that are provided locally, how their lives are impacted at the local level and that they actually have an opportunity, when there is a municipal election, to make a difference and to ensure they have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Last year, the Premier hastily assembled a press conference to pre-empt the auditor's criticism of consultant expenses by announcing that 22 agencies would have to post expenses online.

On September 15, we asked how the commissioner will be able to do the job when you haven't added resources to her office. The Premier said: "We will make sure that the appropriate resources are ... there." But yesterday, the finance minister said that "expenses are with the Integrity Commissioner.... I imagine ... that office is quite backlogged."

You're responsible for the Integrity Commissioner's office. Who should Ontario families believe: the Premier, who promised the Integrity Commissioner's office the resources would be there, or the finance minister, who admitted they are not there?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I'm very proud of the fact that we have brought in measures to improve accountability and transparency for the public sector and also for ministerial staff and ministers. I have also asked the leaders of the opposition, both parties, to post their expenses.

The process is that as of April 1, all the expenses for all these people will be approved and then will go to the Integrity Commissioner. Then the Integrity Commissioner will look at and review those expenses. If there is any problem with those expenses, she has the opportunity and the authority, actually, to recall some of those expenses.

All the expenses that have been approved have gone to the Integrity Commissioner. Now the Integrity Commissioner will approve those expenses. They will come back and be posted on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Wasn't that quite an answer? Wasn't that pathetic?

When you appeared before the estimates committee on May 18, the Ontario PC caucus asked you about the McGuinty Liberals breaking the rules for filing expenses, as well as our plan to extend freedom-of-information legislation to all public bodies.

You said that "the cost was in the range of \$30 million.... it doesn't really make a lot of sense." You said that. But yesterday, when the Minister of Health was asked about extending freedom-of-information legislation to hospitals, she said: "Is there a cost attached to that? Yes, there is, but I think it is worth it in terms of transparency." Why does she now say transparency is worth it, but you don't agree?

But maybe I could ask you another question: Where is the Premier today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's the final warning to the member from Simcoe North. I don't want to repeat what I said earlier, but I made it very clear that references to attendance are not acceptable. If this practice is going to persist on both sides of the House, then there will be naming without any warning to a member, because it's not healthy for this place to do that. You just saw the disorder. I trust that the honourable member has respect for the chair, and I'm quite confident that he is not flouting the authority of the chair.

Minister?

1140

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say that I have every faith in the Integrity Commissioner. If they need more resources, they will come and ask us, and we will be more than pleased to look at that. I had a meeting with the Integrity Commissioner on that issue as well.

But let's just put this in some perspective. On February 18, I sent a letter to the Leader of the Opposition asking them to post their expenses. It took them eight months—eight long months—to develop even a simple website to post their expenses. Then they didn't release any report or even Twitter, for that matter, to tell people where to find those expenses. Eight months to do a simple website that you could post expenses on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. There was some question there about going to the next question, and I thought it would be in the interest of the government that they would want their honourable member—the member had finished the question, and I thought that you would have wanted the member to answer the question. That's what I chose to do.

New question.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre des Richesses naturelles. La semaine dernière, j'ai eu le grand plaisir de me rendre à Foleyet. C'était comme un gros parti néo-démocrate parce que tout le monde portait de l'orange. Tous les chasseurs et les chasseresses cher-

chaient également le résumé des règlements de chasse de 2010 du ministère des Richesses naturelles.

Pourquoi, madame la Ministre, est-ce que dans une communauté aussi francophone que Foleyet il y avait des versions anglaises partout—dans les pourvoiries, dans les LCBO, à la station d'essence à 1,28 \$ le litre, dans les magasins généraux—mais il n'y avait aucune version francophone disponible?

L'hon. Dwight Duncan: La ministre des Richesses naturelles.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to answer the question. It's the first I've heard of this issue. Certainly, we value our francophone hunters, whether they come from Ontario or Quebec. We have people from all over North America who come to Ontario to hunt and fish and camp. Certainly, it's something that I will take under advisement with some more information. I would be happy to work with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Vous voyez, ce n'est pas seulement à Foleyet qu'on ne pouvait pas trouver un document français. Je l'ai cherché à Gogama, à Westree, à Cartier, à Dowling, à Onaping, à Wanup, à Estaire, même à la Rivière des Français—Rivière des Français, vous pensiez?—sans résultat.

Il y a des piles de documents anglais partout, mais pas une seule copie de document en français. Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement de M. McGuinty continue à s'évertuer à ignorer la Loi sur les services en français?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to work with the member, as I said. I have worked with other communities. We've offered briefings for our francophone hunters and anglers. It's very important that we provide those services, and I appreciate her bringing this to our attention.

It is our intention to make sure that everyone has access to hunting and fishing and using the resources we have in Ontario. We're very proud of the services we provide at MNR, and I know that our staff will work very closely with you. We're happy to accommodate your request.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, each year Ontario welcomes thousands of immigrants to our province. These newcomers choose Ontario as their new home because of the opportunities they have to create a better life.

Newcomers bring with them a wealth of skills, talent and expertise which they hope can help them find a good job. Despite having the skills and education, many newcomers find it difficult to enter the workplace in Ontario. Newcomers in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans have told me that their lack of Canadian work experience is often an obstacle to obtaining a job in their field of expertise.

Can the minister tell newcomers in my riding and throughout Ontario what the government is doing to help newcomers find work in their profession?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member from Ottawa—Orléans. The McGuinty government is investing in bridge training programs to help Ontario newcomers succeed. In fact, since 2003, we have invested more than \$175 million to support our newcomers through bridge training programs.

These programs create a bridge to employment opportunities by helping our newcomers get training and local workplace experience so that they can get licensed or certified in their profession or trade. These programs work. They help our newcomers get good jobs to support themselves and to support their families.

Because of the success of bridge training, we recently renewed several programs that are delivering results in Ottawa. For example, we invested an additional \$1.7 million to help more than 700 newcomers get jobs in engineering, the construction trades and other professions. Investments such as these will help Ontario put the skills of our newcomers to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Newcomers in my riding will be pleased to hear that they can access bridge training programs as they make the transition into the Ontario workplace.

The city of Ottawa is home to many new immigrants whose first language is French. There are a lot of new Canadians from the Haitian community in Vanier, for instance. I'm sure you know that the majority of immigrants to our province adopt English as their second language. However, with many newcomers who pursue opportunities in Ontario using French as their primary language, those French-speaking newcomers also need the province's support. They need the government to invest in settlement and job services to help them succeed.

Can the minister tell francophone newcomers in Ottawa—Orléans, in my riding, how they can access integration services in their language in Ottawa?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, thank you for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about what the government of Ontario is doing to support our francophone newcomers.

The McGuinty government recognizes the importance of delivering bridge training programs for French-speaking newcomers, and that's why we're investing in bridge training programs to help our skilled francophone newcomers find good jobs.

In Ottawa, for example, our government has partnered with La Cité collégiale, which helps foreign-trained workers in the construction trades. This partnership helps francophone newcomers access recruitment services, training workshops as well as internships and apprenticeships.

Our francophone newcomers in Ottawa can also access the Ottawa job match program. This is a program in collaborative partnership that connects internationally trained immigrants in Ottawa with Ottawa-area employers looking for workers with a specific set of skills.

These investments will help our francophone newcomers living in Ontario and living in Ottawa get the job training and employment services they need to succeed.

DEFERRED VOTES

OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO
PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Sousa, Charles
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Leal, Jeff	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Matthews, Deborah	
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposed?

Nays

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Wilson, Jim
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to correct the record regarding my answer to the member for Nickel Belt. I wanted to make sure people knew that our hunting regulations are posted in French on the MNR website. I will obviously work on getting the hard copy available in the member's riding, but I wanted to correct that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's a point of order. The member is allowed to correct the record.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome special guests today in the Legislature: Ms. Anne Brayley and her partner, Nanette Sanson; and Leslie Freeman and her husband, Tim Mallory. Welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce Chief Tim Beckett of the Kitchener fire department. Tim is the president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Welcome, Tim.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The guests are not here, but we have a delegation coming from sunny Sicily, from the city of Siracusa. They have the Archimedes exhibit and the conference on a writer called Vitaliano Brancati. They are Professoressa Giuseppina Ignaccolo, the vice-president of the Consorzio Universitario di Siracusa; Professore Giacinto Taibi, University of Catania; Professoressa Rita Valenti; Professoressa Mariangela Liuzzo; Sebastiano Minardi; Edgardo Bandiera, president of the council of the municipal city of Siracusa; Franco Formica, vice-president; Giancarlo Garozzo, councillor; Fabio Rodante, councillor; Angelo Aliffi; Sebastiano Cimino. Four of their hosts are here as well: Roberto Bandiera, Maria Bandiera, Enzo Di Mauro and Connie Di Mauro.

I hope they all get here soon; otherwise, they will still be recorded as being here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNE BRAYLEY
AND LESLIE FREEMAN

Mr. Frank Klees: I welcome to the Legislature today two accomplished Ontarians. Toronto residents Anne Brayley and Leslie Freeman have been competitive squash players in both singles and doubles for more than 25 years and have represented our province and our country with distinction.

This year, in January, they played together as a team and won the Ontario provincial women's veterans doubles championship. They went on in April to win the Canadian national women's over-50 doubles championship.

Over their squash careers, both have been multiple-time doubles champions. Anne has four Ontario and three Canadian championships to her credit. Leslie has won 12 Ontario and 10 Canadian championships, one US championship and three world championships.

Two years ago, they both represented Team Canada in the first Can-Am Cup doubles challenge held in Boston, Massachusetts. Leslie was also the Canadian ladies' team captain. They will both be on the Canadian team again this weekend in the Can-Am Cup tournament which will be played here in Toronto.

On behalf of us all, I congratulate Anne and Leslie on their past accomplishments and wish them continued success.

WILLOWDALE UNITED CHURCH

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to speak about a good-news story in Willowdale. On September 26, I attended a ribbon-cutting and ramp-unveiling ceremony to mark the accessibility improvements to the Willowdale United Church. This is a special church. It's 200 years old—it's been in Willowdale for 200 years—and it was founded by the original pioneers up in that part of the city. The upgrades were made possible through a \$38,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, along with very generous donations from church members.

On a more sad note, I'd like to remember a good friend of mine and long-time patron of the church, Betty Louise Crossley. She passed away shortly after the unveiling ceremony of the ramp, and she had a particular interest in that and in everything else in the church. She was active in the North York Historical Society. She was the church archivist and an example of an outstanding citizen. Kind, compassionate, loved by all, she will be deeply missed. She will be especially missed by the congregants of the Willowdale United Church.

MARGARET WILLIAMS

Mr. Steve Clark: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize Margaret Williams, who is retiring as CEO and chief librarian of the Brockville Public Library. A celebration of her remarkable 40-year career at the city library was held on October 20.

There was certainly much to celebrate in her four decades of service to the people of Brockville. She has been the public face of the library to generations of patrons. Margaret became a trusted source of knowledge, whether people were looking for the latest best-selling novel, a how-to book on home repairs, a bedtime story for their children or some last-minute material for a school project.

She joined the library staff in 1971 and was appointed CEO in 1994. Like the rest of society, much has changed in the library service since Margaret began her career, but her forward-thinking approach and ability to adapt to change kept the Brockville Public Library on the cutting edge as computers, the Internet and other technologies became more prominent.

As a former mayor of Brockville and a former library board member, I want to offer my personal thanks to Margaret Williams. Her professional and personal contri-

butions to the cultural fabric of our community have truly made Brockville a better place to live.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today with good news for our Ontario economy. Early this week, I received information from General Motors that the Oshawa assembly plant just added 600 jobs to the Chevrolet Equinox line on this week's Monday night shift. Production of the Equinox is increasing due to demand for the vehicle made in Durham region by workers in Durham region, including workers from my home riding of Ajax-Pickering.

This good news is a ripple effect of the CAMI automotive expansion in Ingersoll and their expanded capacity to produce GM vehicles right here in Ontario. Our provincial government has helped boost the economies of Ingersoll, Durham region and all of Ontario by being the first non-national jurisdiction in North America to stand up in support of GM's workers during their financial challenges in 2008.

This brings me to a point that deserves to be highlighted: Our province has recovered almost 76% of the jobs that were lost in the global recession. While I know that there are still many people unemployed in this province, our government has a plan, the open end—sorry, that's what we are—the Open Ontario plan to continue boosting our economy, creating more jobs and investing in the people of Ontario.

1310

HOLLAND MARSH SOUPFEST

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last Saturday, I was very pleased to serve as a judge during the Holland Marsh Soupfest, joining with thousands of tasters. Soupfest is sponsored by the Holland Marsh Growers' Association, the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury and King township. The chief requirement at Soupfest is that each soup's primary ingredients must have been produced in the Holland Marsh.

As a judge, I can tell you that it was a difficult choice to pick the winners. But here are the best soups in each category:

—farm fresh or homemade: Outstanding Oxtail by Dingo Farms;

—restaurant or caterers: Roasted Corn by Amaya the Indian Room;

—educational and community groups: Potato Leek by Muskoka and District Chefs Association;

—honourable mention: Split Pea and Ham by Beretta Organics;

—most creative or unique: Organic Tomato and Scallion Consommé by the Club at Bond Head;

—best texture: Beer and Onion by Georgian College.

I encourage everyone to come out to the Holland Marsh at this time of year next year and enjoy Soupfest. I

must also say that I had tasted almost 30 kinds of soup. It was quite a challenge.

Thank you to all of the sponsors, organizers and participants for a great event.

BEACHES LIONS CLUB

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand today to talk about the Beaches Lions Club. It's a mainstay in the Beach. It was founded in 1935, and this Saturday they are having their 75th anniversary celebration at Ted Reeve Community Arena.

If you live in or around the Beach in Toronto, you know of the wonderful work of this group. They have a seniors' home that's located in the Beach, they helped to found Applegrove community centre, and they helped to found Community Centre 55. The Balmy Beach Canoe Club got its start through the Beaches Lions, as did Beach Metro Community News, the venerable newspaper of the Beach.

As I said, they were founded in 1935. They are perhaps best known in our community for the annual Easter parade, the largest Easter parade in Canada, which has grown every year from its roots in 1967. But it also is known for its Christmas tree lighting at Kew Gardens, the annual Canada Day celebrations and the Terry Fox run.

This is an amazing group. It has held many people of very high esteem, including five former mayors of Toronto, who were all members of the Beaches Lions Club. They continue to do good work to this day, and they're hoping that people will come out on Saturday and over the course of the next few weeks to help them celebrate what has been a wonderful group in our community, doing good work, neighbour to neighbour.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Reza Moridi: The McGuinty government has made historic improvements to our energy system to ensure that Ontario delivers the reliable electricity that its people expect. We have been fixing the outdated, dirty and inefficient electricity grid left behind by the Harris-Hudak regime and have replaced it with modern, clean and reliable energy sources.

In 2003, under the Conservatives, 50 million people experienced the largest blackout in North American history. Since then, the Liberal government has made important energy investments to best serve the needs of Ontarians. Under the Harris-Hudak regime, demand increased at a time that generation capacity fell, and Ontario became a net importer of energy.

We have been honest in saying that modernizing our energy infrastructure requires investments, and we are doing our part to make sure that rates remain affordable. The northern Ontario energy credit will provide a yearly credit of up to \$200 per family. The northern industrial electricity rate program gives industry reliable price rebates of two cents per kilowatt hour, averaging a total

of \$150 million per year. This could reduce industrial facilities' electricity costs by up to 25%.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit could give homeowners—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

The member from Beaches–East York on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Prue: I didn't want to interrupt the honourable member, but he twice referred to the Harris-Hudak regime. I think the Speaker ruled that out of order yesterday, and I don't think it should be part of the record, nor should it be part of a member's statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I do thank the honourable member. I did remind the House yesterday of the use of that term, and I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the use of that term.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I withdraw.

PENSION REFORM

Mr. Charles Sousa: The recent economic downturn has made it harder for Ontario families to save and prepare for retirement. The McGuinty government understands that after a life of hard work, Ontarians want to know their pensions are adequate and secure. That is why our government has committed itself to modernizing Ontario's pension system. The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, passed unanimously by this House, was a vital step toward achieving that goal. The Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, introduced to the House on Tuesday, would, if passed, be another significant step towards helping make sure Ontario's seniors and retirees are protected. But there is more that can and must be done. This is a challenge we must face, not just as Ontarians working together, but as Canadians.

That is why the Minister of Finance, on Monday, tabled a motion endorsing a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan. For all Ontarians, but especially the two thirds who have no workplace pensions, the CPP provides safe and defined benefits. But very few Ontarians qualify for the CPP's maximum benefits. We see an opportunity here to increase and improve the retirement incomes of Ontarians and all Canadians.

Our government is taking the steps necessary to ensure Ontario's seniors have a comfortable retirement. But we cannot do it alone, which is why we are calling on the federal government to join us in addressing this important challenge.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Across Ontario, people reject the scenario of publicly funded institutions, such as hospitals, using taxpayer funds to hire lobbyists to influence such taxpayer representatives as ministry staff and MPPs in order to obtain more taxpayer funds. This practice is going to stop. The Minister of Health has introduced a bill that, if passed, will eliminate lobbying, improve

accountability by mandating public disclosure of expenses online, expand the power of the Auditor General to investigate hospitals, school boards and universities, and expand freedom-of-information legislation.

Previous NDP and Conservative governments refused to ensure proper accountability in public institutions. Ontarians want the spending of public institutions to be transparent, and to ensure that taxpayer funds are used to deliver services and not to pay lobbyists. During the last Conservative government, some 150 lobbyists were hired by organizations that received Ontario government funds, including hospitals, universities, school boards and other organizations.

Ontario expects its government to set a high standard and to demand a higher standard of its institutions. This legislation delivers that higher standard.

VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, I too would like to take this opportunity to welcome Anne and Leslie to the Ontario Legislature today and to congratulate them on their tremendous success in sports, and to wish them much success in the future.

PETITIONS

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people—actually, it comes from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike” or lockout.

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Kieran.

1320

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have four petitions here, individually signed, and I will read them.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care

at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I will hand it to page Anika.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition that was presented to me by Chuck McEwan. He asked me to present it to the Legislature. It’s signed by hundreds of people, many of them from the great riding of Oxford, but they’re from all over the province. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for ‘loss of sponsor’ of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

“Whereas, in the present economic climate, the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high, with no relief in sight;

“Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario ... to apply other options in the ‘loss of sponsor’ scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution.”

I’m proud to present this petition, and I will sign it, as I agree with the petition.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients.... ; and

"Whereas," since "October 2009, insured PET scans" have been "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Jonathan.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save medical laboratory services in Stayner, Elmvale and Tottenham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury.

"Whereas people need teeth to stay healthy; and

"Whereas a lack of universal dental care has resulted in an epidemic of poor dental health, and many people are living and working with no teeth; and

"Whereas there is only very limited support for denture care for those on social assistance and no support at all for the working poor;

"Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario to increase funding to assist people on social assistance and the working poor to access denture care."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it, and send it to the Clerk with page Kieran.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I continue to receive literally hundreds of these petitions on a daily basis. It's my pleasure to read into the record this petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

SERVICES DIAGNOSTIQUES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition des gens de Nickel Belt :

« Attendu que l'Ontario fait de la tomographie par émission de positons (TEP) un service de santé assuré par le régime public pour les patients atteints du cancer et de maladies cardiaques...; et

« Attendu que » depuis octobre 2009, des TEP sont assurées et effectuées à Ottawa, à London, à Toronto, à Hamilton ainsi qu'à Thunder Bay; et

« Attendu que la ville du Grand Sudbury est une plaque tournante pour la santé dans le Nord-Est, qui compte l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury et son programme régional de cancer, de même que l'École de médecine du Nord de l'Ontario;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'offrir de la TEP par le biais de l'Hôpital régional de Sudbury, donnant ainsi un accès équitable aux résidents du Nord-Est ontarien. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais y ajouter ma signature et je demande à Emmett de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition that was sent to me by the town of New Tecumseth concerning the HST.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I agree with that petition and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario sent to me by Brian Grove from Ingersoll.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

1330

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with its content.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before we proceed to orders of the day, October 19 to October 26 is Sicilian Cultural Week here in the city of Toronto. There was a large delegation introduced earlier, and I just want to officially welcome the delegation to the chamber today. Some of those individuals are Roberto Meloni, Marcella Fichera, Giuseppina Ignaccolo, Giovanni Cannata and Edgardo Bandiera. Welcome to Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park. Have a wonderful visit to our province as you celebrate Sicilian Cultural Week.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MANDATING SPRINKLERS IN ALL ONTARIO RETIREMENT HOMES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION OBLIGATOIRE D'EXTINCTEURS DANS TOUTES LES MAISONS DE RETRAITE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes / Projet de loi 92, Loi exigeant l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques dans toutes les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Paul Miller: Today is the opportunity for this government to show that they really care for all of our seniors in Ontario. Today, we can move steps closer to mandating automatic sprinklers in every care facility in Ontario. Today, we can speak for those who have lost their lives because sprinklers weren't there to contain the fire and give them a chance to escape. Implementation of Bill 92 will eliminate the two-tiered level of fire safety in Ontario retirement homes.

Since 1980, there have been 44 retirement home deaths and countless injured seniors, causing devastation to their families. Seniors suffer injuries such as broken bones and ripped skin in the well-intentioned rush to get them away from the fire. There have been three coroner's inquests, all recommending mandatory automatic sprinkler systems in every Ontario retirement home. It's not just the fear of death, but the injuries caused to seniors who must be moved as quickly as physically possible—and the sprinkler systems add valuable minutes. All fire stakeholders in our province—the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs; the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; the Firefighters Association of Ontario, representing volunteer firefighters; the National Fire Protection Association; and the Office of the Fire Marshal of Ontario—are on record supporting the retroactive installation of sprinklers in these facilities. All have strongly recommended mandatory sprinkler systems in every Ontario retirement home.

This government cannot ignore this anymore. This situation has been clear to every government for years, but this injustice has not been fixed or dealt with. We have the chance to fix it now. We can all stand together, each of us can finally represent our most vulnerable citizens and mandate automatic sprinkler systems in all care occupancies.

Many of you live or have lived in small communities where services are old, distant or non-existent. Seniors and their families who live in these communities have few, if any, options for elder care. You could send your parents and grandparents or elder family members to a newer retirement home, but that would mean visits maybe once a month, or possibly twice if the weather is good. The best option for elder care is the local retirement home, but it was built in 1995 and today does not require automatic sprinkler systems. So a longer distance with fewer visits or closer to home and familiarity, but less protection in the event of a fire: What decision do you make for your parents?

This should not be a question that any of us have to answer or ask. Every retirement home and long-term-care facility in Ontario should be mandated to install automatic sprinkler systems throughout their facilities. My

Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes, would legislate this protection for our most vulnerable citizens.

Many small communities are years away from ever being able to afford a permanent fire department with the response times of even medium-sized urban centres. Mandatory sprinklers in all retirement homes will contain the flames and give firefighters those necessary extra minutes to reach the fire. Sprinklers will allow time to more safely evacuate our seniors and provide extra safety for our firefighters. With an automatic sprinkler system, the entire emergency operation is simplified. The water flowing from sprinklers will either put out the fire in its early stages or at least contain it. Well-trained retirement home staff would ensure the fire area is closed off, evacuate occupants and be prepared for the arrival of firefighters. The objective is to provide the best level of safety and reduce the possibility of injury and loss of life. It is beyond all comprehension that this necessary step has not been taken to date.

The Fire Safety Commission has recommended that the Office of the Fire Marshal introduce the necessary change to the Ontario fire code, part 9, retrofit, section 9.4, health care facilities, requiring the protection of all residential care homes and nursing homes with the installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems; also, that the government of Ontario find the political will to address the urgency of this matter and do the right thing to protect those who have spent their own lives making a significant contribution to the benefit of today's society and the citizens of Ontario.

As we know, most fatal care facility fires happen when staffing levels are low, in the night or in the early morning. Without sufficient staff to ensure efficient, safe evacuation of residents, the possibility of injury and death is significantly increased. When we consider the mobility issues with many seniors, some bedridden, in wheelchairs or using walkers and canes, it is obvious that every mechanism at our disposal must be implemented to help our vulnerable Ontarians escape a fire in a care facility.

It is unclear to me why the legislation that required automatic sprinklers in care occupancy built since 1997 did not extend to every care facility. Statistics prove that a combination of automatic sprinklers and smoke alarms can reduce the possibility of death by fire by 82%. This is borne out by the fact that there has never been a multiple-death fire in care occupancy with full automatic sprinkler systems. I repeat: There has never been a multiple-death fire in care occupancy with full automatic sprinkler systems in this province. What more proof do we need?

The Co-operators insurance company has written a letter fully supporting Bill 92. The letter in part states: "As an insurance company, the Co-operators deals on an all-too-regular basis with the tragic results of fires. It is especially distressing to see the devastation to lives and properties where simple measures could have prevented that outcome"—simple measures like mandatory automatic sprinkler systems.

Co-operators also states: "There is a preponderance of evidence showing the positive impact that sprinklers have on saving both lives and reducing property damage." And: "Sprinklers are a proven technology that saves lives and the additional time they provide people to escape is even more important in retirement homes, where mobility can be an issue" for some seniors.

And further: "When sprinklers are not installed, the cost to repair fire structural damage will most often be more expensive than water damage caused by fire sprinklers. The argument that the cost of installation is exorbitant is a very weak argument, since it is not consistent with the facts when you consider the lives and property installed sprinklers will save.

"Too many people have died and seniors will continue to be at risk as long as retirement homes are not adequately protected."

1340

I, of course, agree with this completely. This is a no-brainer. This should have been done years ago. Now is our chance.

From the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, we hear: "As important as sprinklers are to saving lives, their benefits go beyond that: Fire damage is reduced by 40%-70% in buildings equipped with automatic fire sprinklers. The one or two sprinkler heads that are triggered help contain the fire and prevent it from spreading. The result? Less fire and water damage overall."

And the real result, the most important result: fewer deaths and injuries to seniors and our most vulnerable citizens.

This morning's announcement by the government of a consultation process is welcomed, but let's not be deterred from the immediate goal. Moving forward with my bill will get the process under way, and it is not contradictory to the consultation process that the government has announced; it's more supportive than anything. In fact, Bill 92 is the beginning of the process. It's the next logical step.

I'd like to thank everyone who has sent in their support for Bill 92 to me and my caucus colleagues, but also to other MPPs across this province. I look forward to working together with you all to take the steps necessary in getting Bill 92 through the committee process, on to third reading and, finally, royal assent.

This is an important issue. I can't emphasize it enough. The media is involved, seniors' organizations, the police, fire—everybody in this province wants this to go through. There isn't anyone—the only ones who are concerned about it are concerned about the possible expense to homeowners, but that can be dealt with through amendments, and it can be amortized. It's not necessarily that it has to be done tomorrow, but it certainly has to be done soon.

What we don't want is another tragedy like Orillia, another one like Mississauga. We don't want any more of our vulnerable seniors exposed to fire, possible death and serious injury. I certainly would like to feel that, if I put my mom into a home in a small town, she's just as safe

as she would be in downtown Toronto, in that building, if it was built after 1998. We pride ourselves on fairness and fair play. Why is the senior in a home built before 1998 not allowed to have the same protection as a person in a home that was built after 1998? It makes no sense to me.

I can say that I'm sure that this House is going to do the right thing today and move on with this. I look forward to working with my colleagues across the floor and the official opposition, because I think we're all on the same page.

Thank you, and I hope that my wishes come true.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm very pleased to stand in the House this afternoon and speak in support of this bill that has been brought forward by my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I'd also like to acknowledge that the member from York West brought forward a bill similar to this recently.

I believe that it is an extremely important issue that needs to be dealt with, and I was very pleased this morning when a statement was released, through a question in the House, regarding consultations about how to improve fire safety in residences for seniors, people with disabilities and other vulnerable Ontarians. I believe that that consultation process could be worked into the consultations which will take place on this bill as it moves forward, because we need to seek the advice from residents, their families and organizations who are directly involved in this. It is, as the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek said, an issue of safety, and I think it's something that has to be dealt with.

My father was a firefighter for 32 years in the city of Winnipeg, and the importance of fire safety and preparedness was instilled upon us from a very early age. Short story: In 1983, my wife and I were in Montreal recording, staying in an apartment hotel residence—I think we were on the 16th floor—when the lobby caught on fire late one night. The alarms went off at about 3 in the morning, and we had to find our way down the stairways to get out. I know what it's like to get out of a building that's on fire and the panic that ensues. I was fairly young at that point in time. It's an experience that I wouldn't wish upon anyone. I can only imagine what it would be like in that situation if you have a disability or if you are aged and have slowed down. I believe that it's so important that we do this.

However, I would like to raise a couple of issues that I'm sure we will be able to deal with through consultations on this. Specifically, in rural areas—in my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, we have many of them. I've had many conversations about this issue with the city of Kawartha Lakes emergency services chief, Dave Guilbault, and we talked about the issues. If there's an area where there is only one seniors' residence in town, yes, this could put a burden on them if it was done immediately.

What I would propose, as this moves forward, is that we look at a way of phasing something like this in over a

period of time, which can be determined through the consultations, so that these residences wouldn't be put into a position where they would have to close because they couldn't afford to move forward. We would then be creating another problem—not as dangerous and not as serious, possibly, but still it would be a huge issue that we would have to deal with. This is about fire safety, and that is a priority.

I would like to congratulate the fire services across this province for the great job that they've done. In the past decade, statistically, we've seen fire death rates fall by 22% in this province, and I think that's a credit—there definitely have to be congratulations sent out to the members of our fire services and emergency services who do such a great job.

In closing, we all have a responsibility regarding fire safety, whether it's smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, escape plans or awareness of hazards. Our conversations today should serve as a loud reminder to all those responsible for the care of others that they are expected to carry out the responsibilities under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. It is so important that we do this, and all of us can contribute to safety. If the efforts that we're making here this afternoon will contribute to that as well and, ultimately, save lives, I think that's incredibly important to the people in this province. I congratulate the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his efforts in bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek's bill, Bill 92, and support this legislation.

He already mentioned earlier in his comments the Orillia disaster two years ago this coming January, in fact, at the Muskoka Heights retirement home. People lost their lives and many people spent a lot of time in hospital. In the end, the management did face charges as a result of that fire. I know the management, and they were just overwhelmed. They were so upset about what had happened. It was a very, very sad situation for everybody. In the end, though, the fire chief of the city of Orillia, Ralph Dominelli, wanted to move forward, and he fully supports your resolution.

I think he would support the announcement that was made this morning by the government—I'm assuming it was made this morning—on a consultation process. It was coincidental to what happened today, but at the same time it did happen. We look forward to that consultation, because I think there's a number of retirement home operators who would like to get some input. We'd also need to get some of that same input from some of the advisers to the building code etc.

I can tell you that my mother-in-law, who's 94 years of age, lives in a retirement home in Waubaushe, Ontario. It's called Elim Homes. In the last couple of years they have actually put in a state-of-the-art sprinkler system. A very neat and tidy job: They worked around the old folks who were in the home, and they managed to

do a really good job of putting this in. They sensed the problem as well.

I did want to say that I talked to an owner of a company that has about 20 homes across the country. Many of them are brand new and have state-of-the-art sprinkler systems and all of the emergency equipment you would ever have or require. But they do have a few of the older retirement homes around that they know they want to upgrade.

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I think it's important. One of the things he mentioned to me in a phone call the other day was, "We can work this in. If you do just a straight sprinkler system, it's going to be about 2,000 bucks a unit. If you've got 50 units, it's \$100,000. If you've got 25 bedrooms, it's going to be roughly \$50,000.

That's not what bothers some of the retirement home operators. What they are concerned about—and I think this will come up in the consultations, and it will certainly come up also if this bill goes to committee, and I hope it will—is the fact that there are some grey areas in the building code around some of the classifications. That's what I'm understanding. They're saying that in some cases, if you put these full sprinkler systems in, you may have to change the stairwells and also the hallways, which in a lot of cases may reduce the number of units you would have. If you reduce the number of units, it may not be feasible to operate. They'd have to shut them down. So they're worried about if you put the sprinkler system into these homes we're talking about, built before 1985, whether or not that would in fact be a problem, if we in fact lost retirement home beds in the province. He was just flagging this for me.

He says that what he thinks would be required best would be a reclassification of those homes with the sprinkler systems in them. I'm just trying to understand the technicalities, what he explained to me, but I just wanted to point out that those are the types of things that may come up in the consultations during your committee hearings.

Besides that, though, it's important that we protect our senior citizens. That's what this bill is trying to do. We're trying to do something positive, and we're trying to do something that is not going to put the cost per month of that retirement home rent out of question for the resident to be able to afford. That's the one thing I wanted to put on the record, and I'm going to try to get a lot more clarification on the building code requirements around that. I just wanted to flag that, because I think it is a slight problem we may have.

However, we're legislators. We can legislate what is required, and we can try to accommodate and have a very, very balanced approach while still having the sprinkler systems installed in these retirement homes, because as the member has said, there has been no loss of lives in any home that has sprinkler systems in it. I understand that's what you are saying and that's what I've heard as well, so that alone should tell the general public that this should be a fairly positive thing in the

long run for our residents. It's going to save lives, and it's certainly going to save the insurance companies a liability that they didn't have before.

I've got to tell you that the disaster in Orillia was incredible, to watch what happened to the home. I'd been in it a number of times, delivering scrolls and at the official openings and stuff. It was an old, old home, but in the end, it burned to the ground. I believe there were four lives lost and a number of people were seriously injured. We're lucky we didn't lose a lot more that time, thanks to the Orillia fire service. They came through, and as a result of that, they have advocated strongly for the sprinkler systems to be installed. I know even just as recently as Fire Prevention Week, the fire service had a display at the local mall, with Home Depot and all the police cars and paramedics etc. that came out, and I can you, that was the number one priority, the number one concern on their minds, that we try to do something in this Legislature to make it mandatory to have some kind of a program to install sprinklers in these retirement homes that currently don't have them.

I think if we listen to the fire services and take their advice and the advice of the insurance companies, it would be a good opportunity and again a good decision to move forward and to pass this legislation, send it on to committee, and then, in conjunction with the consultation that the minister talked about this morning, hopefully we can do good things for the citizens of the province of Ontario, our senior citizens and some of our most vulnerable people.

Thank you very much. It was a pleasure to speak to this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats are very proud of the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and his many legislative initiatives in this House since he was elected three years ago, in particular Bill 92. It's common sense. It just plain makes sense.

It seems to me that objections are difficult to develop to the proposition. We've already talked about saving the lives of seniors in homes, who are at a higher risk because their mobility and their agility aren't what they would be were they 20, 30 years younger. It certainly saves firefighters from the risk of loss of life and damage due to personal injury health issues.

At the end of the day, it's the insurance industry. I can't for the life of me understand why the insurance industry isn't lined up outside the Premier's office, insisting that this bill promptly become law. It seems to me that the insurance industry has no hesitation asking Premier McGuinty for higher premiums—and he gets them; he gives them to them. The insurance industry has no hesitation asking Premier McGuinty for lower benefits packages—and the Premier gives it to them. Well, heck, why isn't the insurance industry lined up here, saying, "We insist that this bill become law because it's going to reduce our costs"? As a matter of fact, as has already been noted, if you want to talk about deferring or

defraying the cost of installation of these things, let the insurance industry give discounts to people who have got these sprinkler systems installed. Furthermore, let the government operate a campaign over the next three years of waiving the HST on the installation and supply of these automatic sprinkler systems in various homes.

Indeed, I have some concerns if there's a suggestion that there are certain properties being used for retirement homes that may not meet code, in terms of the width of hallways and the width of stairways. Perhaps we need a more vigorous and thorough review of the existing stock, especially of private sector, for-profit retirement homes, to ensure that they're safe not only with respect to fire safety, but in every other regard as well.

I applaud the author of this bill, Mr. Miller. We thank him for bringing this to the Legislature. I look forward to being able to vote in support of this, and I look forward even more so to Mr. Miller attending upon the Lieutenant Governor when the Lieutenant Governor gives assent to this bill after third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to stand in support of the bill placed in front of us by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I think the bill speaks for itself in terms of the fact that we want to be able to provide adequate insurance to enable people, especially vulnerable people, to have the safety of living in their homes. But what is most reassuring for me is that, in fact, the member is building upon the good work that's been done by the member from Brampton–Springdale. For over seven years, she's been a really strong advocate for residential sprinklers. We have been debating this issue many times, so all you're doing is building on exactly what has been presented previously. So this is a good example of a coordinated approach to a very serious challenge we have in our community.

We're very fortunate. I know there's a lot of concern that's been expressed around cost and that this will have an impact on the community itself. But we are very fortunate, as I indicated, in that we have with us people in the know who can manage and make this the art of the possible. First of all, we have the firefighters themselves, the supervisors, the people who know about prevention and can help us to deal with this problem. We also have organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association, BOMA, BILD and others that certainly can work with us in charrettes and look at how we can plan an integrated approach to dealing with putting in a sprinkler system.

It really is an opportunity. If the objective is to save a life—and that's the objective. The objective is to save the life of somebody in their home, and a retirement home is somebody's home. The objective is to save a life in somebody's nursing home. It is their home. I think what the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is trying to suggest is that all we're doing is taking the whole concept of what we want as safe in our own homes to be

safe in the homes of the people that we care most about and those who are most vulnerable.

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To think that you would be put in a position where you could not have means of escape is very concerning. For us, who are able-bodied or who have the capacity to walk, it may be easy to escape a burning building. But for those who do not have this capacity, then I think it's really important that we look to what are the options. What is that art of the possible, as they say, where we can provide for these individuals some safety net, some form of security?

As I said, I have great confidence in the work of the firefighters themselves, the work they have been doing, and the work that the member from Brampton–Springdale has certainly been doing for many years on bringing this information to the forefront on how we can positively move forward.

Again, today, I was really delighted to hear that our government is going to proceed with consultations on a very broad range of dealing with this whole issue of fire. We have aging stock, whether we like to admit it or not, and we need to be able to find a place, ways and means for people to feel safe in their own homes.

I congratulate Mr. Miller on building on the good work from the member from Brampton–Springdale, and I look forward to this going to committee and going to consultation so that we can in fact move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to join the debate on Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes, which has been brought forward by the member of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. This bill, as we have heard pointed out now, would require retirement home operators to ensure that their home is equipped with automatic sprinklers that comply with any requirements that the minister may prescribe.

Certainly, I think it's evident that the House is probably going to be unanimous today in doing what it can to support this bill, because it is going to provide very, very important protection for vulnerable seniors who live in older retirement homes, and so there is a tremendous amount of merit and value to this bill. Hopefully, the bill can be supported today. I think it is complementary to the initiative and steps that have been taken by the government today to do some consultation on the whole issue of fire safety. Hopefully, after today, when we approve this bill, it could move into committee, where we would have a further opportunity to address some of the issues and some of the concerns that we know are going to be given very serious consideration, and where we would have the opportunity to listen first-hand to some of the stakeholders and organizations who we've heard are strong supporters of this bill.

This bill would have nothing but a very, very positive impact for the seniors who are living in retirement homes. Although the homes that have been built after

1997 are equipped with automatic sprinkler systems, the current Ontario fire code doesn't require the homes built before that time to have them. Unfortunately, we are well aware of the consequences and some of the tragic loss of life that has occurred in the homes where there are no sprinkler systems.

We know sprinklers slow the rate at which the fire spreads for many reasons. In retirement homes, this is important because we know that seniors take longer to respond to a fire alarm, and they take longer to get out of their chair or their bed and to evacuate a building. In fact, we've heard that residents of old age homes are more than five times more likely to die in a fire than other Canadians. Thus, it is up to us to keep our seniors who live in retirement homes safe and to reduce the morbidity.

The presence of sprinklers, we've heard from all of the associations, can have a significant impact on preventing tragic loss of life. With us today we have Tim Beckett, the fire chief, city of Kitchener, who is also president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. Certainly, they are strong supporters of the fire sprinkler systems in all care occupancies. They have pointed out that it can cut the risk of dying in a fire by 82%.

You've heard from my colleagues about some of the inquests that have been held by the coroners in the past into fire deaths in Ontario retirement homes. They have all recommended that automatic sprinklers be installed in all such facilities.

What we would be doing by passing this bill today would be simply living up to the recommendations that have gone before, and we would be taking steps to protect our seniors and the lives of those seniors.

I think that one tragedy that stands out in my mind was in 2008, when we had a fire at the Muskoka Heights retirement home in Orillia—I can well remember that—where four seniors died and six others had critical injuries.

What we need to do is remember that since 1980, 44 seniors have died. We need to take steps today to move this bill forward and ensure that there will be no other lives lost.

We have a responsibility to protect the lives of vulnerable people and Ontario seniors, and I'm pleased to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise in support of Bill 92 and of my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

As has already been said today, this is one in a long line of bills that finally appears to have some fruition in this House.

There was the first bill, put forward by the Minister of Natural Resources, then in the guise of the member from Brampton–Springdale, asking for sprinklers in every house. That has languished for a long time. I'm hoping that the study that has been offered today will do something about that.

Then the member from Pickering–Scarborough East talked about having audible fire alarms. He has introduced that bill four times in this House, and nothing has ever come of it. But I'm hoping that today, with the announcement of the minister, something happens with that.

Then we had the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek; we're talking about his bill today.

And let it not be forgotten that I too, the member for Beaches–East York, have a bill talking about wooden fire escapes and having interconnected fire alarms, particularly in older buildings. That too has languished on the order paper in spite of the fact that it has been passed four times in this House.

The minister today says that he is going to hear them all. He's going to hear things and listen to people. But I would suggest that he not take a long period of time. Yes, it's important to listen to people, but we have court orders, we have coroners' reports, we have reports from learned people—fire chiefs and many, many people—on what needs to be done. They have been all but unanimous on these aspects, but the government has seen fit, in the seven years, not to do anything with them until today.

I welcome that, but I also have to question what caused this huge chain of events and this change of heart.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chocolate.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, I don't think it was chocolate. I think it was two things. First of all, I think it was the arguments that have been made in this House in the last couple of weeks on similar matters, asking members of the government to stand up in their caucus and fight to get some of these good ideas through. I'm hoping that that at least took place, and was part of the government's change of heart.

The second one had to have been the court decision of just less than a month ago. I quote from an article in the *Globe and Mail* by Christie Blatchford entitled "Verdict in Seniors' Home Fire a Call to Action—but Will Anyone Listen?"

She writes: "In a nearly empty Ontario courtroom, with only a few relatives of the dead and a handful of fire chiefs in attendance, a little history was made on Friday—a nursing home and its administrator were convicted of violating the provincial fire code and fined."

She goes on to write, later in the article: "It was the first time in Ontario that a home administrator has been convicted under the fire code, and one of the few occasions—outside of the leading-edge city of Niagara Falls, where recently seniors' homes have been successfully prosecuted for similar code violations—that a home has been convicted."

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She went on to write and to quote prosecutor Paul Dray: "The owners of such facilities have a duty to be 'more diligent,' Mr. Dray said, noting that more must be done with a fire safety plan 'than sticking it in a damn drawer.'"

I think what has happened here is that the government is finally listening to its backbenchers, but it also now has

the weight of a judge's ruling. Not only is this a coroner's inquest, not only is this many written and oral statements made by fire chiefs, but it is now a court document that will see people in the future in these homes be fined—and rightly so. The fine imposed here was substantial; I believe it was \$25,000 to one individual and \$15,000 to another. But it is only the first of many.

This government finally has to move, because the nursing homes in this province and the administrators will be under considerable risk. The only way around that risk is to either have an awful lot more staff on duty in the evening or to put in sprinkler systems.

I commend the government for finally waking up. I thank the courts for their actions. I thank the members opposite if they had any effect in their caucus. The time has finally come. We need to deal with all of these. The people of Ontario demand safety, and we have a special obligation to those who are unable to care for themselves and who rely upon the safety and the security offered by others.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I would like to join the debate and congratulate the member for his persistence in bringing the bill again to the attention of the House for second reading. It's good to see that there is some consensus in the House with respect to the content of the bill.

Like the member says, this is an issue that is not going to go away, and rightly so. My bill was discussed for second reading last December 3. I know Mr. Craiton, the member from Niagara Falls, had a private member's bill himself—and others. The issue is there, and it's a real issue. They all surround providing safety at its maximum for our seniors in all homes—retirement homes, home care of any kind.

I remember during my previous submission that we have to stop having two tiers of protection: one for those homes seniors occupy built after 1998, and those prior to 1998 that do not have sprinklers and that are not required, as of now, to have sprinklers. Unfortunately, fires don't need any permission to start. They don't have to have any warning, and they don't have to get ready. They can come at any time. Fires, unfortunately, do occur at most precarious times—it could be overnight, it could be over weekends—when there is less staff available and cause more injuries and, often, death.

In Ontario, we have some 580 long-term-care facilities, senior facilities, with some 77,000 residents. I think it has been said before that by 2021, our senior population will represent some 18% of our own Ontario population. So we have to take all of that into consideration.

The fact is that the government, I'm pleased to see, I think, recognized the need to do something. I think that they are serious about it. During one of the conversations I had with some fire chiefs, they did say that sprinklers are not the only solution, and so be it. I think we should be looking at every solution—any new equipment, any

new ways, any new measure that may add protection to those homes.

I do laud the member for bringing this to the attention of the House. I hope it goes through today and that we can move it to public hearings, where, indeed, we can see what the experts, if you will—and I know there are plenty out there with respect to this issue—bring to our attention and what measures, other than sprinklers, they will bring to the table.

Ultimately, I think everyone in the House and the government is interested in seeing that the best is done and the most protection is provided for our seniors.

Even though certain improvements have been made to the act requiring a number of things, either more staff, more education and more details, this is an issue that indeed, unless we do the very best, if we leave something out—we wouldn't want to have another fire cause either death or serious injury.

I congratulate the member, and I hope that today we can move ahead with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure to add my voice to the good work that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has done by tabling Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes.

I would say the stats speak for themselves. Since 1990, we have had 44—count them: 44—people die in retirement homes in a fire. But those were in homes that did not have a sprinkler system.

The stats for homes that do have sprinkler systems: They have just as many fires as any other homes. The number of deaths? Zero.

If that's not proof enough for you, you don't have to rely solely on statistics. Take the word of all of the fire chiefs, all of the firefighters out there, all of the insurance companies. They will all tell you the same thing: Sprinklers save lives. It's as simple as that.

Since I was elected, I've asked this House to bring protection to residents of retirement homes. I've asked and I've asked, and finally, last spring, they brought forward legislation that is going to regulate retirement homes. To my horror, automatic sprinklers were not included in that bill. Neither was any provision for care. Neither was any of what the people out in the field, the families and the residents themselves, had been asking for.

So my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek came up to the front. He drafted the bill, introduced it, and this afternoon we have a chance to debate it.

In a retirement home, you have a critical mass of frail, elderly tenants. My husband is a firefighter. He will tell you that this is a five-alarm bell. When a fire is in one of those, this is what their worst nightmare is all about. You're talking frail elderly, a critical mass of them, with usually very few hands around to help out. It doesn't make for a good scenario.

Sprinklers change all this in a minute, and they're not that expensive to put in. Lots of retirement home tenants pay a lot of money. They deserve good-quality care, and that includes having sprinklers.

Il me fait extrêmement plaisir d'apporter ma voix au projet de loi 92, la Loi exigeant l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques dans toutes les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario.

Mon collègue de Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek a apporté ce projet de loi parce que les statistiques sont tellement claires et éloquentes. Depuis 1990, 44 personnes, résidents de maisons de retraite, ont perdu la vie dans un incendie. Mais ce sont des maisons de retraite qui n'ont pas d'extincteurs automatiques. Si on regarde les maisons de retraite avec extincteurs automatiques : zéro. Il y a autant d'incendies dans les unes comme dans les autres, mais avec les extincteurs automatiques, on n'a pas de perte de vie. Pour moi, la décision est facile.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member, Mr. Miller, from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to start off by thanking the members from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Simcoe North, Etobicoke Centre, York West, Welland, Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York and Nickel Belt. By the participation today in this bill from all members of the House, I have a good feeling that we're all on the same page and this bill is moving in the right direction. I'd like to express my thanks to all members of the House for their non-partisan views on this. They're doing what is good for the people of Ontario. They're doing what is good for our seniors and our most vulnerable citizens.

This is a very important bill not only to our seniors and vulnerable citizens but also to our firefighters and our fire chiefs for their safety, which is put at the forefront of any situation that requires emergency services.

I commend the other member who had brought this bill forward on more than one occasion. She certainly has fought hard for this situation too. So hopefully we've got enough backing and the engine is there to push this over the top, because I think it's time for it. We certainly don't want to have any more deaths on the hands of our communities or our government because of the lack of proper safety installation.

I'm sure that this bill is going to go to third reading and I'm sure it's going to go to the Lieutenant Governor for royal assent. I'm very happy with the discussion today. It's a rare commodity at times, but it certainly shone through today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Miller's ballot item has now expired. For those in the galleries and those at home watching, we'll vote on this matter in about 100 minutes.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Howard Hampton: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should take all necessary

steps to allow the Legislature to have equal and effective oversight over the spending decisions of all Ontario energy service agencies—including the Ontario Power Authority and the independent electricity operator of Ontario—and to hold energy officials to account for their decisions, including by calling these officials before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hampton moves private member's notice of motion 50. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Some incredible things are happening in Ontario today. We are in a situation where the Ontario Power Authority, by the latest statistics, has signed electricity purchase contracts to the tune of \$26 billion—electricity supply contracts that in some cases will bind the electricity consumers of the province for 30 years, and in some cases for up to 40 years. I think most people across Ontario would be surprised indeed—perhaps even “astounded” might be a better description—to learn of those kinds of figures, \$26 billion in contracts that will bind hydroelectricity consumers for up to 40 years.

Ordinarily, when a government agency—and the Ontario Power Authority is a government agency. It is a corporation 100% owned by the government of Ontario. Ordinarily, when a government agency embarks on spending decisions or other important decisions, that body can be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies from time to time to explain its decisions, to explain the different scenarios that have led to those decisions. Indeed, under the standing rules of the Legislature, there are over 200 Ontario boards, agencies and commissions that can be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and their operations reviewed—over 200 of them.

Just to give you some examples: Hydro One can be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, and they have been called to explain some of their decisions. Ontario Power Generation can be called, and they have been called. The Law Society of Upper Canada, Legal Aid Ontario, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Realty Corp., the Ontario Clean Water Agency and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario can be called. The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the Ontario Securities Commission, Cancer Care Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board—these are all important government agencies which make decisions that can affect the lives of millions of Ontarians, and they can all be called before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies to explain their decisions and the scenarios that have led to their decisions. I think to most people across Ontario, that is as it should be. No body should be a power unto itself and be able to escape the review of us, the elected members of this Legislature.

The sad fact is that the Ontario Power Authority, which has signed electricity supply contracts with private

electricity suppliers for 13,785 megawatts of electricity that will cost more than \$26.2 billion and which contracts will bind Ontario electricity consumers for possibly 40 years—and many of these electricity contracts will pay more than 20 cents a kilowatt hour for the electricity produced. Some will pay upwards of 40 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity produced, and some will even pay up to \$100 per kilowatt hour under some of these contracts. I think people across Ontario would be astounded to learn that that agency cannot be brought before the government agencies committee.

So I'm really appealing to members of this Legislature that members of this Legislature should be empowered to do our jobs; that no agency should be allowed to engage in those kinds of spending decisions and those kinds of contractual commitments and escape the normal course by which agencies, boards and commissions are reviewed by members of this Legislature.

I suppose someone might argue that there might be another mechanism whereby they can be reviewed. Well, I checked on that. The Environmental Commissioner does have authority to comment on some of the conservation decisions of the Ontario Power Authority, but does not, under the legislation that exists, have the authority to review anything beyond that. It can simply comment on their conservation decisions or lack thereof. Similarly, the Ombudsman is not empowered to conduct a review. I suppose if the Auditor General received thousands of complaints, there might be a process whereby the Auditor General could look at this, but again, that seems to be a process that comes at this after the fact.

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I would submit that when an agency is signing contracts to the tune of \$26 billion that will bind electricity consumers for 30 and 40 years into the future, coming at this after the fact is far, far too late.

Someone could argue, I suppose, that you could use section 126 of the standing orders, but section 126 does not provide any certainty of review. Someone could perhaps argue that you could use section 111 of the standing orders, but again, that doesn't provide certainty of review either.

What is important about the Standing Committee on Government Agencies is that members of the government can simply propose agencies, commissions and boards to be reviewed; members of the official opposition set forward their list and priorities for agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed; the third party can set forward their list of agencies, boards and commissions to be reviewed. And that's it. The agency then must come forward and be held accountable.

What I'm asking the government to do and what I'm asking the members of the Legislature to do—I recognize this is not a one-step process, but today is one step in getting there—is to support this resolution so that we can do our job of holding government agencies accountable for the decisions they make, so that we can inquire into the nature of some of the contracts, so that we can ask questions and we can ask expert advice to come forward

and comment upon these kinds of decisions. I think it's important for all of us.

Five or 10 years from now, if this goes off the rails and we find that some of these contracts were not wisely entered into, I wouldn't want the responsibility hanging on my head that we didn't do all that we could; that we didn't use the legitimate rules of the Legislature to ensure that these kinds of agencies, boards and commissions are held accountable.

That's the case that I make here today. I fully recognize that in supporting this resolution it will not accomplish everything that needs to be done from A to Z. But this is the starting point in holding a very important government agency to account for the decisions that it has made and for the spending of \$26 billion of hydro ratepayers' money. Indeed, you could conceptualize where this could easily become taxpayers' money, since it is an agency that is 100% owned by the government of Ontario.

I hope all members will put aside partisan interests and recognize that this is an important step in legislative accountability, not only for today but thinking 20 and perhaps 30 or 40 years into the future, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for—let's get this right—Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. Sorry, sir.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thursday afternoons: They do get long, don't they?

It's a pleasure to join the debate on the resolution by Mr. Hampton, "that, in the opinion of this House, the government should take all necessary steps to allow the Legislature to have equal and effective oversight over the spending decisions of all Ontario energy service agencies—including the Ontario Power Authority and the independent electricity operator of Ontario—and to hold energy officials to account for their decisions, including by calling these officials before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies."

On the face of it, there is much legitimacy in the member from Kenora—Rainy River's motion to this House. Over the past seven years, since the creation of the Ontario Power Authority, for example, which he spent much of his time talking about—an agency, you might recall, Mr. Speaker, that was originally intended as a virtual agency. It started out with some 15 employees and has grown exponentially. In fact, it has grown in size and budget by 464%.

The number of six-figure salaries across the government as a whole has gone up 134% under the McGuinty mandate. But at the OPA, the number of people making \$100,000 a year or more has gone up 1,300%. So it is natural for people to ask themselves: Should the Legislature have more oversight of an agency that has grown to be so significant? As I said, this was originally intended to be a virtual agency that basically was a shell of an agency.

We have to go back and think about why the government did this. The government did this, and it has mani-

festated itself in the way that the OPA has been used over the past seven years. They created OPA, a so-called virtual agency, to act as their buffer and their shield so that there would be some kind of shock absorber to absorb the blow that should be inflicted on the government but is instead inflicted on the Ontario Power Authority for decisions made by this government. That in itself raises the question of who is making the decisions, and if those decisions that are purported to be OPA decisions are actually the result of government directives, then I think the people want to know that and want to be able to hold accountable the proper authorities. That, in most cases, should be the Minister of Energy.

I don't want to single out any particular Minister of Energy under this regime, but let's talk about the original Minister of Energy, the member from Windsor—I'm not sure if it's Windsor—Tecumseh or Windsor West, but we know which member from the Windsor area was the energy minister. He was the one who created the OPA with Bill 100. He created this monster, but he doesn't want to be answerable for it.

It's interesting that in the early days of the OPA—I shouldn't say "the early days"; even until a couple of years back when Jan Carr was CEO of the OPA, I, as the energy critic—I was not always the energy critic, obviously; I wasn't the energy critic when the OPA was started, but I have been the energy critic for a few years now—met with him on a number of occasions. He initiated the meetings because he felt it was important for the opposition energy critic to have some information as to what was going on at the Ontario Power Authority.

Well, Jan Carr retired and was replaced by Colin Anderson, the current CEO of the OPA. I have never received a call—not one—from the current CEO of the Ontario Power Authority. Not once. I met him at a couple of functions and had a cursory greeting, but I have never been asked to sit down with the current CEO of the OPA to discuss business, and as I said, Jan Carr initiated all those other meetings himself.

So you have to ask yourself: When they took Colin Anderson out of finance and put him in the OPA, did he get his marching orders too: "Don't talk to the opposition, don't co-operate, don't answer questions, avoid meetings"? I don't know. But we do know one thing: More and more, the government agencies in the electricity sector are being operated by ministerial directive, and they have neutered to much degree the leadership at those agencies themselves.

I want to speak for a minute about the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, which was brought in by the Bill Davis Conservative government many, many years ago and was to act as the consumer protector in the energy field, to ensure that consumers were always protected and that their interests were paramount when considering energy decisions here in the province of Ontario.

Recently, the head of the OEB, one of the best people in the industry, Howard Wetston, jumped ship and has gone to the Ontario Securities Commission. Why? You'd have to talk to Mr. Wetston to get his version of it, and

he's such a diplomat and a wonderful person that he would be very circumspect in his answer, but one has to speculate that perhaps Mr. Wetston, who was a fine chair at the OEB, just couldn't take the interference anymore: the interference from this government so that the agencies were being run by directives. That's not protecting consumers; it's not protecting consumers at all.

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So there is the challenge. We need to have these agencies accountable—and I respect and understand the view of my friend from Kenora–Rainy River that in all matters of government the people reign supreme, and the people are represented by this legislative body. So the body, on behalf of the people, must be the supreme arbiter when it comes to decisions in this province—or the making of laws. We understand that the courts will always be the supreme arbiter should we step out of line. But there has to be the ability for the Legislature to ensure that these agencies are functioning in the best interests of the people.

I have a real challenge with the member's motion because I understand what he is trying to accomplish here, but at the same time, our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear that should we form the government post-October, should we be honoured with government after October 6, 2011, one of the first things we will do is restore the Ontario Energy Board's ability to act in the best interests of the consumer. In fact, we will create a dedicated consumer advocate at the OEB to ensure that the consumer is first when energy decisions respecting the needs and the ability of the consumer to pay are made. That's a commitment our leader has made because of the mismanagement that has become obvious at the Ministry of Energy level under the McGuinty government.

But you also have to accept that, once an energy policy is in place and once we have the agencies—and the mandates have to be prescribed properly so that people do come first. But once a plan is in place, we also have to ensure that government stops interfering, and that's the problem today. This government has so politicized the energy file that they can't keep their fingers out of the pie. They can't stop from interfering because everything is being run on a political basis, not on what is in the best interests of the consumer or the energy industry here in the province of Ontario.

We've also taken the position that, should we be honoured with government after the next provincial election on October 6, 2011, we will allow those agencies with the proper mandate to conduct and follow through with policy that respects, protects and enhances the electricity system here in the province of Ontario without constant, daily political interference on behalf of the party in power. That's not the way you run an electricity system. Those boards have to be accountable, those agencies have to be accountable, but government has to be accountable as well, and government can't put out an order and a mandate to an agency with a goal in mind and then constantly interfere just because the winds of politics blow in a particular direction.

We see that happening in this government on a daily basis, whether it's interference in the pricing of electricity, whether it's interference in the carrying out of time-of-use pricing, whether it's interference in whether or not a new energy plan will even be brought forth to the people of Ontario, which has been promised on several occasions. In fact, they're in contravention of their own law in this province right now, because the mandate of the OPA was to bring in a new energy plan every three years, which they have failed to do. But how do you do it when you're constantly being interfered with by the Premier or the Minister of Energy?

The mother of all Ministers of Energy, who is responsible for so much of this mess, thankfully is not the Minister of Energy anymore. George Smitherman is gone. His fingerprints are all over the mess that is energy today, and hopefully at some point we can clean this up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm here to support my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River and a resolution that in my mind is very, very practical and reasonable, something that I would think the majority of Liberals here today would support. The reason I think the majority of Liberals here today would support it is because the Minister of Health has stood in this House over the last couple of days saying, "We have had enough."

By the way, she agrees with New Democrats, because we've been pointing out for the last couple of weeks that universities and hospitals are spending millions of dollars hiring consultants to lobby the ministers. We think it's insane that public dollars should be used in that way when all they have to do is call themselves, reach the minister or the Premier or the MPP, and they've got a meeting. Instead they pay millions of dollars to consult some of whom are very close to them, some of whom may not be that close, in order to have a little sit-down and talk about a few things that connect to the universities or the hospitals. It speaks to the culture of inadequacy of funding; that's really what it speaks to. The point is, they should not be spending dollars that ought to be spent to help students, that have to be spent to help patients, in order to lobby the government.

We New Democrats felt it was wrong, and the Minister of Health says, "We agree. We have introduced a bill that's going to be debated that says, 'Enough is enough.'" We agree with the minister, because that old cow is getting tired. You can only milk that cow for so long before the government, too, says, "Oh, my God, it's been seven long years. It's time to stop this practice and move ahead and move on and make sure money is spent wisely for the purposes for which it was intended." So I think it was a great idea.

I want to praise the government for introducing a bill—seven long years; I know it takes time. They've finally come forward with a bill that deals with it. God bless. That's okay.

You say to yourself, given that they want to do that with consultants who are overpaid and need not be there,

surely a resolution of this type would be welcomed by Liberals who are present here today. But I wait to see, because I have a sense that somehow they don't want this matter to be dealt with in the legislative committee of government agencies. You know sometimes when you have that visceral sense of what Liberals will do or will not do? I have an inkling that they may not support this very practical, reasonable suggestion that the member from Kenora-Rainy River is making. I don't know why I feel that way, but it remains to be seen, at 4 o'clock when we vote.

Why do I think the Ontario Power Authority and electricity operator of Ontario ought to be reviewed? Why do I believe there should be some oversight? Why do I believe that people like my colleague and friend from Kenora-Rainy River should have the opportunity to ask them questions about how \$26 billion is going to be spent by these two corporations in order to make capital investments, in order to be able to purchase electricity from private producers? We're not talking about \$26 million; we're talking about \$26 billion. Surely, good Liberal members who worry about the citizens and the taxpayers and the fact that they're tired and the fact that they don't have money to make ends meet—surely, most of you would want to make sure that the correct questions are asked. Then why is it that we give so much money to some of these producers to purchase their electricity? Why is it? Maybe there are good reasons for it, but we should be asking some serious questions.

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We should be asking the question: Why is it that these corporations need to have \$26 million—\$21 million or \$20 million; how much is it?—\$21 million for professionals and consultants? Why do they need \$21 million for consultants? To do what? We're talking \$21 million for professionals and consultants to do what? To talk to the minister, to talk to the Premier, to talk to the opposition parties? These are dollars that we citizens, that the taxpayers ought to be able to keep in their pockets as opposed to giving it away to people who just don't need our money.

Most of you probably don't know—and I've had the good luck of looking at this report that came to the government agencies committee that makes that figure abundantly clear. I'm not making it up, members of the rump, other members on the other side. I'm not making it up. It's in the report, on page 3 of this report that was written for the members of government agencies. If I was making it up you could say, "Ah, Marchese's making it up"—

Mr. Charles Sousa: No, no, no. Never.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. That's exactly it. It's because I make reference to the page, right? Page 3 at the bottom of that report, just in case you have doubts about that.

You've got the Minister of Health saying we're ending that practice, yet these fine corporations—well paid, to boot, by the way. A lot of these officers make more than the Premier of Ontario. Can you believe that, Howard?

Mr. Howard Hampton: A lot more.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A lot of these folks who work for these two agencies, these two corporations, they make a lot more than the Premier, who gets slapped around—as you noticed, Sergeant—day in and day out. He gets slapped around, and these men, good men and women who work in these corporations, they're hidden from our view and the view of taxpayers and citizens, making good money. God bless them.

They're going to be dishing out \$21 million for consultants, but the Minister of Health says it's time we stop that practice. She said that today. She said that yesterday, the day before, and she said that last week. If you want to stop it, members of the rump and you fine people of the Liberal Party on the other side, this is the time to do it. Stop that practice. Bring this agency, bring this corporation to the committee of government agencies and let's do a review.

By the way, I say to many of the Liberal friends, we've done some good work, Minister, in committees where we collectively, all three political parties, have tried to work together in so many instances. We've done that. Why can't we do this today? Why can't we do it? I tell you this: If we can't do it today, it's because you fine people have something to hide. I'm serious. It could be that some friends of mine don't have anything to hide; it could be. But I suspect that if most of you do not vote for this, then you all have got something political to hide.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I admit it's harsh, but I suggest to most of you that if you vote against this resolution, you have been told to vote against this resolution, and you are not independent, as you normally might be. And I want to leave room for doubt in that regard, because from time to time, some of you are independent and some of you act without being told how to act, which is a good thing, to be an MPP. It's not like you're kids, necessarily.

I want to believe today that some of you are going to break ranks and that you will find this resolution reasonable, that we ought to have the power—three political parties, government members and two opposition parties—to be able to have oversight and review and to ask the tough questions about how our \$26 billion are going to be spent over the next 40 years. There's nothing more reasonable than that. And I'm looking to the various ministers that are here and the Minister of Health to come in this Legislature and vote in favour of this resolution, given what she has said in the last couple of weeks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise and debate this bill and to remind this House that the government does take steps to provide oversight for spending decisions of Ontario's energy service agencies and does hold energy officials to account for their decisions.

This government has already demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency and accountability in the

areas addressed in this motion. In fact, the two agencies referenced by the member for Kenora–Rainy River were included in the list of the 22 largest Ontario agencies when the McGuinty government legislated new accountability directives in the fall of 2009.

Ontario energy agencies are already held to account by the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, which has the power to review and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the operation of all agencies.

The PC Party actually changed the freedom-of-information act to exclude Ontario Hydro One and the OLG in 1999, a move they said was to secure their competitiveness.

Yet, strangely, on the subject of accountability and waste, the NDP actually voted against the McGuinty government's ban on public funds for partisan advertising.

Successive McGuinty government Ministers of Energy have been working to implement the recommendations of the independent Agency Review Panel, resulting in major adjustments in the compensation structures and leading to improvements in agency efficiency.

The fact is, the agency review process proves that the system is working to provide accountability within the energy agencies to the minister while maintaining their independence and arm's-length nature.

The relationship between the ministry and each of the agencies is described in a memorandum of understanding which outlines the reporting requirements of each agency.

Let's review the Agency Review Panel, phase 1.

The Agency Review Panel's work was to recommend new criteria and a new model for determining future compensation arrangements for top executives at Ontario's energy agencies.

The minister at the time, Minister Duncan, accepted the phase 1 recommendations and wrote to the chairs of the boards of all the agencies, advising them to implement the panel's recommendations. This has led to a reduction in remuneration paid to senior executives at the energy agencies.

In phase 2 of the Agency Review Panel, their work examined the five provincial energy agencies to assess potential overlaps, with a view to identifying areas for efficiency improvements.

The panel's report indicated that the system was working and that the structure and organizations in place were appropriate in the ongoing development of our electricity system.

While the report pointed out that there was some overlap in the functions of the OPA, the IESO and the ministry with respect to conservation and demand management programs, these issues have been addressed, to a great extent, through increased coordination among the agencies and the ministry.

Following the release of the phase 2 report, under "Overlap and Duplication," Minister Phillips agreed with the panel on the need for stability and that it was not the right time to implement institutional change in the sector.

As a result, no changes then were made to the role of the OPA. However, under the terms of the Green Energy Act, the position of chief energy conservation officer was eliminated and its functions transferred to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

Regarding the approvals process, the report called on the government to enact legislation that would create a single integrated approvals process for electricity projects. Subsequently, the Green Energy Act included measures to streamline the approvals process for renewable energy projects and associated transmission projects.

Regarding the role of the OPG, the report called on the Minister of Energy to provide greater clarity. As Minister Phillips noted at the time, the 2005 memorandum of agreement between OPG and the government defined OPG's role in the hybrid market.

The report also called for provincial policies to facilitate the consolidations of local distribution companies. The transfer tax exemption for public consolidation activity has been made permanent.

The report also called on Hydro One and the IESO to work together to develop a uniform approach for connections assessments. Hydro One and the IESO have subsequently signed an MOU on connections assessments for renewable generation applicants.

Let me now highlight the relationship with the ministry and the memorandum of understanding with the agencies.

The MOUs include business planning, annual reporting requirements, and matters relating to executive compensation. Through the MOU process, the ministry works with the agencies on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment between the agencies' work plans and the government's priorities, and to press the agencies to find ongoing cost efficiencies in the work that they do.

For example, the OEB's MOU states that "board staff and senior officials of the ministry shall discuss the contents of the business plan during the drafting of the business plan in respect to the alignment of key initiatives with government policy directions, performance standards, and compliance with the AEAD."

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The agencies are now also required to adhere to the new travel, meal and hospitality expense directive, effective April 1, 2010, and the new procurement directive, effective July 2009. In addition, the OEB must comply with the revised agency establishment and accountability directive that came into effect on January 26, 2010. This directive details the accountability framework in which ministries and agencies operate.

In regard to travel, meal and hospitality expenses, the McGuinty government has introduced a new summary of guidelines that boils down 25 pages to two pages. These simplified guidelines apply to all employees at Ontario agencies, boards and commissions, and expenses for senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies are now posted online.

The Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009, gives Ontario's Integrity Commissioner the legal authority to

review the expense claims of senior officials who are employed by or appointed to the province's largest agencies, boards and commissions. The legislation requires employees in government agencies to abide by the same level of accountability and oversight that cabinet ministers and political staff must follow under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act.

Hydro One, the IESO, the Ontario Energy Board, the Ontario Power Authority and Ontario Power Generation are designated as "other included entities" under the procurement directive, 2009, and are required to comply with the directive.

Let's not forget also the expanded sunshine list. The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act applies to the Ontario Power Authority, Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Energy Board and their subsidiaries.

When dealing with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the McGuinty government brought in regulations under FIPPA that ensure that the activities of Hydro One and OPG are subject to provisions of the act. As well, the requirements of the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act, 2003, must be adhered to.

The member's resolution speaks to agency transparency, but let me reaffirm that the government has demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency and accountability and has made many changes. Unlike the Conservatives, we brought the following under FIPPA: publicly funded universities, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation and local public utilities.

Let me remind this House again that our government broadened the powers of the Auditor General to review public sector organizations. It's important to note that the Auditor General must also approve our financial books before an election so we can't hide a deficit, as was done in 2003.

The McGuinty government has already taken steps to protect public dollars to improve transparency. We've eliminated any sole-source contracts. All new Ontario government consulting contracts must follow a competitive hiring process, regardless of dollar value, and consultants will no longer be able to bill for hospitality, food, expenses and incidental costs. All employees at Ontario's largest agencies, boards and commissions will be required to have their expenses reviewed by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner.

In all, we're making expenses and the rules more simple and effective. We're posting expenses online for everyone to see. This will hold employees to the same standard as cabinet ministers and staff.

Let's not forget that the Conservatives removed Hydro One from freedom-of-information laws and then used Hydro One as an expense account for Conservative insiders, allowing dozens of untendered contracts and forcing taxpayers to cover the bill for posh expense accounts. The McGuinty government has taken the steps required to make sure that these types of abuses can't happen again.

Yesterday, our government introduced powerful legislation to raise the bar of accountability and transparency in the health sector as well as the broader public sector, and unlike previous governments that refused to make advancements in accountability, our government continues to expand accountability and transparency mechanisms as we strive to ensure that taxpayer dollars are protected.

Bottom line: This government has taken steps to implement the necessary oversight of spending by Ontario's energy services agencies and holds officials to account for their decisions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to commend my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River for his motion.

Let's talk about accountability. Let's talk about the bill that the government brought forward on good governance that's come out. The Ontario government has direct or indirect jurisdiction over agencies, boards, commissions, councils, tribunals, foundations, associations and municipalities. That takes up a lot of space. My colleague did his homework. He's got a list here of 196—there are probably more—agencies, boards and commissions that the Ontario government oversees. As we've witnessed with the eHealth scandal, the OLG scandal—and now there are some concerns that have been brought out by a Spectator investigation into university CEOs and their expenses.

The government certainly is making a move to correct this situation, but they blame former governments, the NDP and the Conservatives before them. But they've had seven years to correct this problem. Why wasn't it done? They got caught with all these problems with accountability, and that's why they're moving now, through media pressure, public pressure and embarrassment. I guess the bottom line is, if you live in a glass house, don't throw a rock. They've had plenty of time in two terms to correct this problem—and it seems to be getting worse. I can assure you that before election time next year, there will be more scandals coming out on expenditures and wasted money on consultants. It's just unbelievable.

Take eHealth alone: They got about \$100 million worth of hardware, software and programs out of that \$388 million they spent in five years for the electronic health cards, and they still haven't got it right. About \$288 million of that went to Liberal-friendly consultants; two thirds of the budget went to consultants. That's just one ministry. Can you imagine how much more is out there?

There's more to come. Stay tuned, because it's going to get worse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to enter the discussion on the motion put forward by the honourable member from Kenora-Rainy River.

My colleague the honourable member from Mississauga South explained in some detail the work that our government has done over the past seven years in relation to bringing accountability and transparency to the agencies under the government of Ontario.

I would like to take my colleagues through where we were before 2003 and where we are now. Of course, we know where we are now, but maybe we have forgotten where we were before 2003.

The previous Conservative government removed Hydro One from the freedom-of-information act and created, basically, a situation where some of the expenses were meant to be paid to Conservative insiders through Hydro One. Former Premier Mike Harris, when he left office, actually collected \$20,000 in consulting fees from Hydro One. Nobody knew what work he did for Hydro One. One of the senior Conservative insiders, Paul Rhodes, was contracted by the previous government for over \$335,000 for strategic communications advice. This was just before Mike Harris's re-election. Rhodes was also paid \$15,000 a month, for a total of \$225,000, to produce a report, again on strategic communications. Apparently, he prepared a 10-page report, so each page cost \$22,500—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member from Kenora—Rainy River, Mr. Hampton, has two minutes for his response.

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Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank my honourable colleagues for their contributions to the debate.

In summarizing, I want to go over some of the points that I made earlier. I think it's right and proper that Hydro One should be reviewable by the government agencies committee. I think it's right and proper for the Ontario Power Generation corporation, because they too can spend hundreds of millions of dollars; the Alcohol and Gaming Commission; the Ontario Trillium Foundation; and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. Again, many of these organizations can spend billions of dollars a year or, through their operations, can contribute billions of dollars a year to the government and to Ontario society.

But if it is right and proper for these organizations to be held accountable before the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, then I think it's very difficult to justify an organization which has already signed contracts worth over \$26 billion, contracts which will bind hydroelectricity consumers in this province for 30 and 40 years, contracts which ultimately could also affect the taxpayers of this province for 30 or 40 years—I think that most reasonable people would expect that that kind of agency would, as a matter of obligation, be reviewable by the very committee of the Legislature whose mandate and purpose is to review these kinds of agencies.

I think the people of Ontario have a right to demand this, and we, as legislators, should do all that we can today to make sure it happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Hampton's resolution in about 50 minutes.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health should immediately approve the planning grant requested by the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the township of Centre Wellington, allowing it to proceed to the next stage of planning for a new hospital; and should also immediately approve a small project capital grant for the Georgetown Hospital in the town of Halton Hills, allowing it to proceed with its needed emergency room addition and diagnostic imaging renovation project.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Arnott moves private member's notice of motion number 49. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I begin my remarks this afternoon by quoting from an article in today's Toronto Star, in a column written by Jim Coyle, where the Minister of Health of the province of Ontario was quoted as having said, "Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have and that's their MPPs." I couldn't agree more with that statement.

Privileged to serve in this Legislature, members of provincial Parliament must always bear in mind why we are here: We are here to serve the people. We are here to provide leadership, yes, but also to give voice to the views and aspirations of the people. Perhaps most importantly, we are responsible for addressing their genuine needs. It is in that spirit that I tabled this private member's resolution in support of our hospitals in Wellington—Halton Hills.

The Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington and the Georgetown Hospital in Halton Hills are the hospitals located within the boundaries of my riding. Both are centres of excellence in local health care, and are the hubs of health care delivery in their communities and the larger catchment areas that they serve. But they not only have to address the health care needs of today, which they are doing very well; they must also plan for future needs. To do that, they need the government to come forward with a long-term plan for hospital projects, a plan we are all anxiously awaiting.

But I first want to focus on the good work our hospitals are already doing in their respective communities. Groves Memorial Community Hospital, located in Fergus, serves a community that is geographically very large. Its catchment area includes, in addition to my riding of Wellington—Halton Hills, the riding of Guelph and the riding of Perth—Wellington. Founded by Dr. Abraham Groves, a visionary surgeon who has the historic distinction of having performed North America's first appendectomy, the hospital has a long history of innovation, excellence and integrity.

Continued growth, development and partnership of services reinforce the need to have appropriate facilities to promote wellness and opportunity to be creative in providing care. For Groves, this means continued investments in ongoing improvements, service, equipment

and people. But it also means planning and preparing for long-term projects like the new hospital development.

I want to outline just a few of the many reasons why Groves deserves that long-term investment. First of all, we are ready to go. Secondly, this hospital provides service to approximately 25,000 patients each year through the emergency department and thousands more through diagnostic, ambulatory care and in-patient services. For its success in addressing the health care needs of a relatively older, rural population, Groves was called a cornerstone in the community for rural residents to access health care in 2010.

Groves's exceptional and dedicated medical staff are top-notch. Since March 2007, Groves has provided educational training and support for 108 medical students and 27 residents, making Groves a leader as a pre-eminent rural teaching facility, training physicians all across the province.

Last year, Groves added a CT scanner, providing this essential diagnostic technology to patients, serving them closer to home. And yet, the hospital is also benefiting patients far beyond its catchment area because the Groves team knows how to form successful partnerships. This is one of their greatest strengths. They've led the implementation of the Upper Grand Family Health Team. They've formed the community oncology clinic with Grand River Hospital. They've shared services with Guelph General Hospital. They've formed an administrative alliance with North Wellington Health Care in order to maximize efficiencies between small, rural facilities for the last five years. They've done all of this and much, much more. Thanks to their aggressive action on emergency room wait times, Groves took its four-hour average wait time to nearly 2.5 hours for the average ER visit in just eight months.

They've done all this while exercising respect for tax dollars. While some hospitals, unfortunately, have had to run deficits, Groves over the last three years has had balanced budgets or surpluses. It's no wonder Groves enjoys such extraordinarily strong support from the community and it's no wonder that some 250 people choose to volunteer their time with this fine organization. In anticipation of the new hospital project, the volunteer association and the hospital foundation raised \$15 million from local residents and supporters. They've also raised \$2 million so far for the CT scanner.

I want to acknowledge the presence of a few people here today from Groves seated in the members' gallery and I want to thank them for their excellent work. Having made so much progress on so many fronts, Groves now needs the government to do its part. Allow us to move on to the functional program stage, which is the next stage of planning, for our new facility.

In the very same way, Georgetown Hospital also has every good reason to be proud. Here we have a hospital that is doing a tremendous job serving the residents of Halton Hills. This is true in a number of areas but most notably in its emergency department. Georgetown Hospital led the province in improvements to length of

time admitted patients spend waiting. The hospital beat expectations and achieved a 32% improvement. In fact, 84% of patients admitted to an in-patient bed from the emergency department spent less than eight hours in the ER. For that achievement, the Ministry of Health awarded a year-end financial bonus to assist the hospital in sharing its strategies for success.

The hospital's accolades don't stop there. Even the Recycling Council of Ontario has recognized the hospital for achievements resulting from its green program, through which it has achieved a 60% recycling rate. The hospital also holds a safety expo recognizing patient safety initiatives. In the last two years the Ontario Hospital Association has recognized the hospital for many of those initiatives.

Perhaps no recognition, however, is more meaningful to our health care providers than those coming from patients themselves. The Georgetown Hospital has achieved strong patient satisfaction results in all areas of the hospital. Improvements in pay-for-results metrics have shown improved satisfaction results in nearly every dimension measured.

But I want to return to that emergency room so central to the hospital's proposed improvement. The current emergency department was designed in size to accommodate 14,000 visits per year, yet in the last fiscal year, the hospital saw 32,800 visits, well over twice the number for which it was designed. Here's what they tell us: "The most important initiative is the [emergency department] pay-for-results program. It is difficult to describe the incredible results we have achieved and what a difference it has made in our ability to treat patients. The staff and physicians are totally engaged in the performance.... Everyone is engaged in making sure we meet our targets." So it's clear that Georgetown Hospital is doing a great deal to showcase the very best of our system, and for being here today, I want to thank representatives from Halton health care and the Georgetown Hospital, who have also joined us.

1520

I began working with them in 2007 when I picked up where our distinguished colleague from Halton left off, after a redistribution which added the town of Halton Hills to my riding. The very day after that election in 2007, I wrote to the Minister of Health to ask for an expeditious review of Georgetown Hospital's pending CT scanner application. The hospital now has received that approval. But now we need to move forward with this diagnostic imaging project and renovate our emergency department as well.

This past summer, on August 26, we had a meeting to discuss the project with hospital staff and senior Ministry of Health staff in the minister's boardroom here at Queen's Park. The ministry was clearly informed that the hospital would appreciate receiving a small capital grant to expedite the project. But in order to plan responsibly for the project, the hospital needs to know where it might be in the queue. We know that there are dozens of proposed hospital projects in dozens of communities across

Ontario. I have been asking for the whole list of projects through an order paper question, and more recently, through a freedom-of-information request. We're still waiting for it.

The outstanding community support for the Georgetown Hospital, like the community's confidence in Groves, should suggest that we need to move forward, but we must respectfully ask this government's help. They could send a positive signal today by supporting this motion.

I think it's important to state my firm belief that decisions on approvals for hospital projects should not be made on a partisan basis. It would be wrong for a government, any government, to show favouritism to the ridings that it holds at any given time when it comes to deciding which hospital projects will be seen as high priority and which ones will score as lower priority—wrong and short-sighted, for the provincial government must seek to govern for all the people. The process for determining which projects will go ahead first must be objective and transparent and explicitly non-partisan. Otherwise, in effect, the government opens itself up to the charge of punishing communities for their traditional voting patterns.

Any government doing this would show itself to be contemptuous of democracy itself, for inherent in our idea of democracy is the right of individual voters and communities to choose their representatives freely, without coercion and without intimidation. Any government that refused to approve a hospital project because of local politics would be beneath contempt and deserving of the defeat that would surely follow.

I should also point out that the catchment area for the Groves hospital, meaning the geographic boundaries of the area that it serves, includes communities outside of Centre Wellington. For example, many residents of the riding of Guelph use the Groves emergency department because they believe they may see a doctor faster if they present there than at Guelph General. Residents of Alma and Arthur and the surrounding areas in the riding of Perth-Wellington have always used Groves as their local hospital. When you look at it this way, Groves can look to three MPPs to advocate for them, two of whom are currently on the government side of the House.

I have been pleased to encourage the member for Guelph and the member for Perth-Middlesex to show their support for Groves, and I was glad to receive a written expression of support for the Groves project last December from the member for Guelph. Now that she serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, we hope she's in a position to follow up, and we would ask her to do the same for Georgetown.

When I'm in Georgetown, whether it's at the walk for the hospital in the fall or the annual golf tournament in the summer or the annual Christmas ball in December—all successful fundraisers organized by the hospital foundation—we often hear that it's never easy to raise money. Many people simply do not know that hospitals don't receive funding from the government for new

equipment. They assume, incorrectly as it turns out, that the Ministry of Health pays for equipment, which makes it harder for the fundraising efforts to be successful. It would be helpful if the Ministry of Health would develop a communications strategy in co-operation with the Ontario Hospital Association to support the work of our hospital foundations.

In closing, I look forward to the debate on this motion. I have tried to approach this in a non-partisan manner and have written all MPPs to seek their support. I know that many members have hospital projects in their riding, and I would encourage them to talk about their own hospital needs this afternoon. Let's work together across the partisan divide in the best interests of our constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to commend my colleague for speaking up for his constituency and for speaking up for people—in this case, the community hospital in the township of Centre Wellington. I think it's important that all members do what they can to speak up for their constituencies. But I want to disagree with him in principle on a couple of things.

We have just witnessed, over the last couple of weeks, examples where hospital funding apparently is not being allocated on the basis of need; it's being allocated on the basis of who you know, who your consultant is and how close your consultant is to the Premier's office or the Minister of Health's office. That's a terrible way to make health care decisions. Equally, I think it would not be a good way to make health care decisions simply in terms of the lobbying we might do. I want to see better health care for the constituents in my constituency, but where a hospital should be placed and what kinds of services that hospital should provide I believe should be decided by people in the Ministry of Health whose business it is, whose work it is, whose dedicated task it is to look at the health care needs and to look at what can be provided and where it is best to be provided.

I think MPPs should play a role, certainly, in making the case and in arguing the case, but at the end of the day, the decisions should be made on the basis of health care need and on the basis of how to most cost-effectively and how to most efficiently provide those services. Just as it's wrong for a hospital board that has money to throw around to purchase the services of a consultant who claims to have the inside door to the minister's office or the Premier's office, just as it's not proper to have health care funding made on that basis and hospital funding made on that basis, it would be improper, in my view, for health care spending or health care investments in my riding to be made on the basis of who is closest to me.

MPPs should advocate; we should advocate on behalf of our constituencies. But at the end of the day, these decisions should be made according to a rational process, a process that looks at health care need, a process that looks at how to most efficiently and cost-effectively provide these services and ensure that the services provided are the services that people need.

I wish my colleague success with his resolution here today, but I wanted him to know the different lines that I draw in the decision-making process so that he is not taken by any surprise in this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think very highly of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and I consider him a friend. In that spirit, I'd like to follow on his debate and try to keep this to some of the issues.

The member is a good lobbyist and an effective member. I can say that across the floor. Firefighters know that: He's brought their case very effectively to the floor. But I have to ask: Is he lobbying the right people, is he lobbying at the right time and is he lobbying in the right place? Is the process being proposed by the member in this resolution indeed a rational process? Is it a responsible means of asking for something that I'd like to have if I were in his place? Is it a fair process?

1530

I'd have to say, in looking at the resolution, it's unfortunate that the word "immediately" has been put in, because "immediately" makes it very clear that his needs supersede that of every other region in the province, and it also requires the government, if the will of the House is to be heeded, to overturn any decision made outside this chamber, made for reasons that we here don't know. It's unfortunate that that word was put in because it constrains the debate on what I think is a very worthwhile resolution.

So I would ask the member to think carefully: Does he really and truly want this decision to be made on the floor of the Legislature? One of the reasons I say that is because here in the greater Toronto area, the GTA, for about the last 35 years running, in terms of growth, we have done the equivalent of building the city of Kingston every year—all of its people, all of its infrastructure, all of its support services and facilities. Every year in the GTA, we build the equivalent of a city the size of Kingston.

The member is asking us not to balance the needs of high-growth regions and communities such as York region, Peel region and cities like Vaughan, Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville with some of the needs of the communities that he's in. I ask him again: Is this process rational, is it responsible, and is it fair in the circumstances?

He's pointed out some things with which I very much agree. Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus received base funding of more than \$15 million in 2009–10, which is an increase of \$3.3 million, or 28%, since our government was elected in 2003. It's a fine institution, and its performance shows. Halton Healthcare Services, of which Georgetown hospital is a part, received a more than \$77-million increase in base funding since 2003, a 72% increase. It, too, is a very fine health care facility. We join with its management and staff in celebrating its accomplishments. On the watch of his former government, that was a little different. Again, just to

ensure that we're talking about the same thing: Groves Memorial Community Hospital, on the watch of his party, sustained an \$834,140 cut, or about 9.29%. In the nearby community of Guelph, Guelph General: a cut of \$877,516, or about 3%. Halton Healthcare Services: a cut of about \$1.9 million, or 3.23%.

Since our government has been elected—let's talk about some of our record in the Wellington–Halton Hills area. There are three new family health teams in Wellington–Halton Hills. They've hired 50 doctors. They've hired 35 other health care professionals. They're providing care to 58,034 people and, indeed, 9,890 previously unattached patients have been enrolled.

In contrast, when the Leader of the Opposition served as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, they closed 28 hospitals, they fired some 6,200 nurses and they closed some 7,110 beds. The flip side: Since 2003, Ontario has built 18 new hospitals, hired more than 10,000 more nurses and more than 2,300 additional doctors.

I understand the member's request. Can he square it with his party's policy to cut \$3 billion from health care funding by eliminating the health care premium? And should they still choose to do that, how do they plan to fund the request that the member makes in the resolution that he's just brought forward?

Talking about the Georgetown Hospital emergency room: The hospital received ministry approval to acquire and operate a CT scanner at the Georgetown Hospital site in September 2009. The approval was provided with the understanding that an approval for an own-funds capital renovations project would be requested and undertaken by Halton Healthcare Services to accommodate the scanner. Due to the limitations of the existing building condition, the hospital is now proposing an addition to extend the emergency department, including purpose-built space for the new CT scanner and renovations to the diagnostic imaging department, with an early capital cost of \$10 million, including equipment.

In July 2010, the hospital wrote to the Health Capital Investment Branch, inquiring about the availability of small capital project grants to fund a proposed Georgetown Hospital emergency room expansion and CT scanner acquisition project. As I understand it, this is the essence of what the member's resolution is about.

In August of this year, the ministry met with the hospital and with the member for Waterloo–Wellington to discuss this proposal further and the new process, in light of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the LHIN joint capital review framework. The hospital has been advised, both in writing and at that August 2010 meeting, of the following: "The hospital must work with the LHIN to ensure that they obtain appropriate advice on the program and service elements of their capital proposal," which leads me back to my original question: Is this the appropriate time and place in which to bring this project forward?

"The ministry's small project allocation is under considerable pressure; therefore, there is little capacity to

explore small projects in 2010-11. The hospital is encouraged to explore alternate options for accommodating the CT scanner only, including an own-funds project, a phased approach or a scaled-back approach."

Talking about the investments at Groves Memorial Community Hospital, they've had a more than \$3.6-million increase in base funding since 2003-04, nearly 30%; more than \$200,000 in total funding received from that first year, 2004-05, to 2010-11 to reduce wait times, which amounts to 202 more procedures, including general and pediatric surgeries.

Groves Memorial Community Hospital signed their two-year hospital service accountability agreement with the Waterloo Wellington LHIN in 2008. Is the member proposing to supersede that agreement? I don't have that information as a legislator to make that type of an informed judgment based upon the resolution presented.

The hospital signed an amending agreement with the LHIN in 2010, thereby extending the agreement through 2010-11. I ask the member again: Are you sure you want to bring this measure to the floor of the Legislature rather than working with the LHIN?

Now, in terms of local hospital funding, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus received base funding of more than \$15 million in 2009-10, which is a total increase of \$3.3 million, or 28%, since 2003.

Province-wide, the province has created more than 170 family health teams, teams of doctors, nurses and other health professionals working together. Three of those family health teams are in Wellington-Halton Hills where, as I said before, they've hired 50 doctors and 35 health care professionals, providing care to 58,034 people, and have enrolled 9,890 previously unattached patients.

In the Upper Grand Family Health Team, they've hired 22 doctors, 17 health care professionals, providing care to 25,776 people, with 3,876 previously unattached patients enrolled.

The Halton Hills Family Health Team hired 22 doctors, hired 13 health care professionals, providing care to 27,064 people, with 4,870 previously unattached patients enrolled.

In the East Wellington Family Health Team, they've hired six doctors, five health care professionals, providing care to 5,194 patients, with 1,144 previously unattached patients enrolled.

Now, it's not as if Ontario has ignored the member's area. Indeed, the member has done very well during a time in which many fundamental changes had to be made in order that health care, as we know it, would remain sustainable. All of us, particularly those of us who are in high-growth areas, understand the nature of what the member is proposing. We wish that the amount of funds available to all of us were infinite because nothing would please anybody more than to say, "You can all have everything that you need." But in order to do that, I have to say to the member that we need to make those sacrifices. If we decide to do that, what does that do to the rates that we charge for taxation, for health care

premiums and for the other means by which we make the investments that we need to make in health care in the province of Ontario?

1540

In summary, while I have a great deal more information that I could discuss, I'm nearing the end of my time. I want to ask the member to consider and to address in his closing remarks whether he feels that this is indeed appropriate to bring to the floor of the Legislature; whether, as members, we have the information that we need to make an informed, fair, rational decision; and, to echo the comments of my colleague from Kenora-Rainy River, is the process the right process in the circumstances?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think I want to begin my remarks by responding to the member from Mississauga-Streetsville and just point out to him today the remarks of the Minister of Health in the paper, where she strongly encouraged MPPs to lobby on behalf of hospitals, because we are in an appropriate position to do so.

I also want to congratulate my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills, who has advocated very patiently, but very passionately and very strongly, on behalf of the two hospitals in his riding. He has done so and brought this motion forward today with the approval of the Minister of Health. She thought it was most appropriate, and that's why we're here.

We're also here today because at one time, we did have a list of capital projects. We actually did know which hospitals were going to be receiving approval for what stage at what time. Unfortunately, over the period of the past seven years, we seem to have lost the list. In fact, some of the hospitals that were on the list have suddenly disappeared from the list. Hospitals that were in Liberal ridings, I might add, suddenly found themselves on the list. I think all the member is asking is, "Where's the list? Where do my communities fit on the list?" He raises a question: "Are my communities not being informed about the status or non-status on the list because I am a Conservative?"

Do you know what? I hope we haven't reached that point, because I want to tell you what happened when I was Minister of Health. We had the Health Services Restructuring Commission—and by the way, I hope the opposition starts to get the facts right—

Mr. Norm Miller: The opposition? The government.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The government. You will be in opposition next time if you continue to make some of the statements that you do.

But the reason that hospitals were closed was because we did amalgamations. We had a Health Services Restructuring Commission. We identified that there were needs in Mississauga that weren't being addressed. You were being asked to travel to downtown Toronto. We had the commission and you, as a result, got cancer facilities, you got cardiac facilities, you got new emergency rooms, and you know what? There was progress made, but we

got rid of some of the small hospitals as a result of the commission recommendations. So for you to say repeatedly that we closed hospitals—we didn't. In fact, I'm going to tell you what happened, and your own members wanted it to happen. The other thing I'll tell you is, we hired 12,000 nurses. So for any statements to be made on an ongoing basis—they are not true, and you probably should take a look at the record.

I want to go back to what we did, because we were not partisan. We relied on the commission to make the recommendations as to what changes should be made to hospitals, which hospitals should close and which hospitals should become new state-of-the-art facilities. We built new hospitals.

But I want to tell you what happened when two of your colleagues approached Premier Harris and me. Lyn McLeod, the former leader of your party, and the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North came and said, when it came to Thunder Bay, “We don't like the recommendations of the commission.” The commission said they were going to close three hospitals and have two. They said, “No, we want you to close all five hospitals.” So you're probably including the five in whatever count you used on a daily basis. They said, “We want a new Thunder Bay regional health sciences centre.”

They also said to me—and I remember it so well—“But we won't get one because we're Liberals and Conservatives are never going to give a new hospital to Liberals.” I said, “Do you know what? If your community can demonstrate the need and is able to support one new, state-of-the-art, centrally located facility, I guarantee I will fight for you at the cabinet table and I guarantee that my Premier and my cabinet colleagues will approve your new hospital, because we're not interested in playing partisan games.”

Well, guess what? Much to the delight of Lyn McLeod and the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North, we approved the request from the community for which Lyn McLeod and the member Michael Gravelle advocated so strongly, and to their surprise they got the new hospital.

I hope—I ask the government today—that surely you will listen to my colleague who is here today, not representing himself, but representing the people from the two hospital communities who have recognized that they have an outstanding facility, but based on future needs, they need more. They're only asking to know, “Where are we on the list? When are we going to get the funding?” They need permission to move forward to the next stage of planning the Groves Fergus hospital. That's what they are looking for. At Georgetown, they want to put the CT scanner in place, but they can't, based on the facility that they have today.

All he's asking for today is, “Please tell us, where are we on the list? We have future needs. Our citizens deserve to have access to care that is required, but right now they do not know where they stand and they can't move forward. They're not getting any answers.”

I applaud my colleague. He has been professional. He has been passionate. He has taken every step necessary

trying to find out where these two hospitals stand in the queue. There have been no answers forthcoming, and that brings us to today. I hope this government will demonstrate the same type of concern for people in the province of Ontario, whether they live in government-held ridings or opposition ridings. I hope they'll carefully consider what's being asked for by these communities as indicated by my colleague. I applaud him for all he's done in such a professional manner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: This is an interesting request. I must commend the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. He's doing his job as an MPP. He's representing his people, what they require in his community and probably what his local council has asked for. He's doing his job.

I personally can support this. I can't speak for my colleagues, but I do feel a bit uncomfortable voting for something that's out of my field of expertise without confirming it with the experts in the field. I would have liked to have seen a little more data. The member did send me some information on it, but I would have liked to have seen more.

1550

I have mixed feelings here. While I'm sympathetic to the community, hospital planning should not be done by this chamber, in my opinion. We all could use more health services in our communities. Hamilton has been very hard hit. We all need more facilities, especially for the aged, and more hospital beds opened up for serious things, and long-term care taken outside the hospital environment with the good facilities we need. I don't really think this should be decided by politicians, and I certainly don't favour going along party lines. I think this should be a non-partisan decision.

As for the comments of the former speaker, I wish he wouldn't rule us out. We may have to make a decision down the road. It's always between them and the official opposition, but you never know: The NDP might be making decisions, so don't rule us out.

Health dollars should flow to where they're needed. Health services are required in every community. Unfortunately, this government is a little tired. Its precious health dollars go to whichever organization hires the best lobbyists, in my opinion, with insider friends in the McGuinty government. That's not good.

It doesn't matter which politician is sitting in that riding or that constituency, the health dollars should go to the place that needs them the most, not because the person sitting there is Liberal or NDP or Conservative.

I'm not quite sure that those decisions are always made in this House or by the government. Unfortunately, party lines sometimes interfere with good decisions for our health care. I don't like that. That's not a good thing.

Instead of improving health care for Ontarians, the McGuinty government is shutting down emergency departments and cutting nursing hours. Hamilton closed emergency services at McMaster University, if you want to know where.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Fort Erie, Port Colborne.

Mr. Paul Miller: Port Colborne and Fort Erie. When they attack the official opposition, they're not exactly running a stellar program either, in my humble opinion. Once again, if you live in a glass house, don't throw rocks.

As has been witnessed in the last few weeks, we are squandering millions upon millions of dollars on insider consultants—absolutely atrocious.

I'll bring eHealth to the front again, the scandal last summer. In committee, I asked questions and other people asked questions about what we got for our dollar. They spent \$388 million on eHealth electronic health cards—studying, setting it up. I said, "What did you get for that?" They told me, after I pushed and asked for freedom of information, which we had to pay for, by the way. We're the government, but we still had to pay to get it; I can't figure that one out.

We got the information, and they told me, "Well, Mr. Miller, it looks like we got about \$100 million worth of hardware and software programs for eHealth cards." I said, "What happened to the other \$288 million?" They weren't too anxious to answer, but it went to consultants. Sixty-six per cent of the budget over the five-year period went to consultants. That's a pretty scary figure.

That's one ministry. We have 22 major agencies that you've now decided to audit. I don't even want to think of how many billions of dollars have gone out the window. It's pretty hard for me to explain to a mother in Hamilton with two kids and nowhere to go because she can't pay her rent and can't pay her hydro that the government is spending \$2 million a day on consultants. What do I tell that mother? What do I tell the person waiting for a position in a long-term-care facility who can't get in because there's a waiting line—not enough facilities?

Really, there is so much to look at, so much to do, so many people who require health services, so many people who require new hospitals, new facilities. I don't blame this member for doing what he is supposed to do as their representative, and I don't have any problem. To me, it's not a motion that's going to hurt anybody; it may help some people in his community. I'd hope he would return the favour, if I was in the same boat.

To make a long story short—I could go on for hours about waste of money, but this is a good project, a new hospital for a community. I don't have a problem with that. I don't have a problem with a new hospital in anybody's community. So my personal vote will be with the member; I will support his motion. I don't have a problem with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to stand this afternoon in support of the resolution that's brought forward by my good friend and colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills with respect to his resolution to ask for the planning grant to be granted to Groves Memorial Community Hospital to allow them to

continue to plan for a new hospital and to the Georgetown Hospital for the hospital redevelopment project.

I would like to point out again how tirelessly the member has worked on behalf of his community for this. He's asked in all of the proper ways to do that. He's written to the minister, he's gone through all the proper channels, but he's been stymied at every turn. I think the members of the community have been extremely patient up until now, but naturally their patience is starting to wear thin. They have raised over \$15 million in order to start this capital project, as we expect all communities to do. But, frankly, if that's the expectation in communities across Ontario and you never know where you are in the lineup, it starts to cool people off. People figure, "What's the point of trying to raise this money?" If you want to sustain that momentum, you have to know where you are in the line. I think that's really what this resolution is aimed at: It's to have a clear, open, transparent and rational process for determining the priority of capital projects like hospitals in the province of Ontario.

There are dozens of projects across the province, and I'm sure the members of the communities who are represented here aren't asking for special favours. They're not asking to jump the queue. They're not asking to be given priority as far as anyone else is concerned. What they are asking is, "If I take a number, tell me where to take the number and tell me where the line is." But they don't know. It's out there.

That's what we really need, and I can certainly speak to that from my own community, coming from Whitby–Oshawa. We have a huge, growing population; it's one of the fastest growth areas in southern Ontario. And we're just waiting to have our own little hospital reopened. It was closed July 2, 2007, as the result of an electrical fire, and we had to wait for two years, until the end of September 2009, to hear from the Minister of Health that money would even be coming to repair the work that needed to be done in order to reopen the hospital, never mind even thinking about asking for a new hospital, which we so desperately need. But we know that until—we are waiting. I don't even know when it's going to be, some time next spring, I hear, before this hospital is going to be reopening. We need that, just to sustain what we have as well.

I know this is happening in places all across the province of Ontario. What we really need is a plan. We need to know where the lineup is for capital projects. We also need to have a 10-year health strategy, which I know my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has been mentioning on many occasions. We don't have a 10-year plan for health care in the province of Ontario. We're starting to see our health care breaking down at the seams, with the huge pressures on our emergency rooms, emergency rooms that are closing down in various parts of the province, with those incredible increases in the number of ALC patients, people who can't find nursing homes, who can't find the home care they need in their own communities.

What we really need from this government is a plan, a thought, instead of ad hoc gestures here and there. We

need a plan for long-term care and health in the province of Ontario. We need to have a capital projects list so that communities across the province can know where they are, so they can plan for it. If they are going to be 10th in line, they know that they have that time period in order to do the fundraising that they need to do. But you have to give people a reasonable expectation of time; that's all that is being asked for here. I think that's all the members of this community that are here to support their member and the wonderful advocacy that he has done—I think this is something the government should certainly support as well.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think Mr. Arnott is going to find that the New Democrats are supporting him in this effort today. Of course, this isn't the place, here on the floor of the chamber, where you should be doing hospital planning. But, hell's bells, when you have LHINs that are political hacks—political appointees—that are doing the government's bidding in a very political way; when you have LHINs that are unelected, unaccountable and oftentimes irresponsible, and certainly anonymous; and when you have hospital boards that are hand-picked people and where there's no democratic or open or public process, no transparency whatsoever—I commend the member for his diligence.

Let me tell the government: Its sophistry in response to Mr. Arnott's motion will end up biting them on the britches, being too cute by far in somehow dodging the issue here. You know what this is about. This is about either letting the folks in the communities that the member for Wellington–Halton Hills represents know that the government is with them or that the government is against them. Mr. Arnott is doing a very effective job at demonstrating that today. He's shedding some light on some health care needs down in his community. He's doing the job he's supposed to be doing; good for him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank you very much and the members who have spoken to this resolution this afternoon. I want to thank the member for Kenora–Rainy River, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member for Whitby–Oshawa and also the member for Welland.

I say to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, who spoke on behalf of the government—who was a last-minute fill-in, it appears, for the member for Oakville, who apparently was called away to an important meeting at the last minute, even though he was apparently scheduled to speak—and who asked the rhetorical question: “Is this a rational and responsible and fair way to approach it?” I would say that your Minister of Health would say yes to all three questions. Again, the quote in the *Toronto Star* today: “Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have, and that's their MPPs.”

I again reiterate to the member that I spoke to the Minister of Health before I even tabled the resolution that we're debating today. I informed her of it, and I said to her, “I'm going to try to take a non-partisan approach to this, as non-partisan as possible, because I'm trying to sincerely bring forward the needs of my community.” Her response was, “But Ted, you have to do your job.” In other words, she understands that this has to happen. I've spoken to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the member for Guelph, three or four times to make sure that she's aware of what we're doing here today. She has already written in support of the project with respect to Groves. In fact, I have a letter in writing from her from December of last year where she expresses support.

The LHIN in Waterloo–Wellington has expressed support for the Groves project to move forward to the next stage of planning. Again, I would urge the government to support this motion in that regard. The Georgetown Hospital, given the fact that I was informed of their project a few months ago, and my opportunity to raise a private member's resolution—I obviously wanted to include them in it too. That's why a reference to their project is in the motion as well. Theirs is just as important as Groves, obviously, in their need. I want to represent both communities equally. That's why I'm bringing this forward today.

I've tried to do it in as non-partisan a manner as possible. I'm concerned about the partisanship of the remarks of Mississauga–Streetsville. I accept the fact that he was asked to speak on short notice, but the fact is that our communities need the approval to go ahead with these projects. I again urge the Minister of Health to show that they're not going to put partisan politics ahead of the patient needs in my riding, and I would urge all members of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business is now expired.

MANDATING SPRINKLERS IN ALL ONTARIO RETIREMENT HOMES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION OBLIGATOIRE D'EXTINCTEURS DANS TOUTES LES MAISONS DE RETRAITE DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll first deal with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Mr. Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 92, An Act to require automatic sprinklers in all Ontario retirement homes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Miller?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to express my thanks to all members of this House. It's nice to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Which committee would you like the bill sent to, if any?

Mr. Paul Miller: The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed? So ordered.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 41.

Mr. Hampton has moved private members' notice of motion number 50. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll call in the members after we deal with the next ballot item.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 42.

Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion number 49. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1606 to 1611.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hampton has moved private members' notice of motion number 50.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Delaney, Bob	Johnson, Rick	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Kular, Kuldip	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will open the doors for 30 seconds.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Arnott has moved private members' notice of motion number 49.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Kular, Kuldip	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters related to private members' public business have now been completed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 20, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 110. It goes by the name of

the Good Government Act, but I find it a very strange name for a bill when this government had the potential for many other names. It's a rather paradoxical title. How can a government that has passed so many bad bills recently and made so many poor decisions from which they've had to backtrack pass a bill with that name? It really doesn't make a lot of sense.

Also, if we take a look at the bill, it actually has nothing whatsoever to do with good government. It is merely a collection of minor revisions to numerous pieces of unrelated legislation. These changes certainly do not amount to good government, and if that's what this government thinks these changes are all about, maybe that's why they've lost their way as they continue to introduce bad bills, provide bad government—certainly not government bills that are in the best interests of people in the province of Ontario. So I really don't think, based on the fact that it's merely a collection of minor revisions to numerous pieces of unrelated legislation, that it warrants such a grandiose title.

I'd just like to share with the House some examples of why this government has not earned the right to introduce what they say is a good government bill.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of meeting with representatives from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the RNAO and the Ontario Lung Association. These are people who have a genuine concern for the environment and a concern about the impact of the environment on human health. They asked us to support them on a number of environmental issues that they believe are critical in resolving some of the adverse environmental effects on human health today. Of course, the one issue that came up for discussion was the whole issue of the coal plants. They asked that we support the closing of Ontario's four remaining coal plants. Well, we have said since about 2001 or 2002 that we did support the closing of the coal plants. We also said at that time that it really was not going to be possible until about 2014 or 2015, because you have to take into consideration that you need a plan. You need a plan to make sure you can replace that energy with an affordable supply of energy and an adequate supply of energy. You obviously need to have a plan to mothball the coal plants. You need a comprehensive plan. You need a strategy. You need to provide leadership. Well, we haven't seen any of this from this government. In the election of 2003 they unthinkingly, to try to gain the votes of the public, said, "We're going to close all the coal plants by 2007," and they didn't even have a plan to do it. Of course, they weren't able. In fact, the only government that's been able to close a coal plant is the government that was headed up by Premier Davis—no, not Premier Davis, Premier Harris; both great Premiers. Premier Harris did oversee the closure of the coal plant at Lakeview. In fact, I was the Minister of the Environment.

1620

When I signed the regulation in 2001, we knew that it was going to take four years to decommission that plant,

and so it was very irresponsible of this government to have made a promise in 2003 to say they could close them all by 2007, when certainly anything that we had been presented with by Ministry of the Environment staff indicated it wasn't going to be possible to realistically do that until 2014 or 2015.

This government, of course, broke the promise to close the coal plants in 2007, and then they said, "We're going to do it in 2010." But again, this government had no plan. In fact, this government never has a plan. We never see timelines; we never see an implementation plan; we never see anything that resembles, "We need to do this by this time, and if we do, we need to achieve these objectives each year. This is how we're going to do it and this is how much money it's going to cost. These are going to be some of the consequences and challenges that we face, and this is how we're prepared to overcome them." This government just never has a plan. They never have any strategy. They just continue to provide poor government and make promises that they are never able to keep.

So we are here today, and who knows when any of the coal plants are going to close? That's why this coalition was meeting with us, because they recognized there are problems to human health and they're looking to see what they can do. This government just isn't providing the public with any information.

Right now we have no idea what they're going to do when it comes to energy. All we know is that anything they have done thus far, including introducing the HST and the additional amount of money that we now see on our hydro bills, and the passage of the Green Energy Act, has done one thing: We have seen skyrocketing electricity prices. Every day in this province we have seniors coming to our MPP constituency offices, pleading for help with the increased energy costs. Some of them recognize they may well have to sell their homes. They're on fixed incomes and pensions and cannot afford the skyrocketing electricity prices that we're seeing today. They are paying the brunt today of this government's poor planning.

This government has been establishing its energy and environmental policy on an ad hoc basis, and unfortunately the people in Ontario are paying the price. So I would submit to you that to name this a good government bill when all we're seeing is a government that is unreliable, can't be depended upon and makes irresponsible promises makes no sense. This government has serious problems that should be addressed, and instead of addressing those problems, we are now spending over seven hours debating a bill that makes minor revisions to legislation.

I know the member for Beaches–East York suggested that we rename this bill the much ado about nothing act, and probably that is a more appropriate title, because most of what's contained herein is routine housekeeping. It does nothing to improve the dire economic situation we are facing in the province of Ontario, which has seen skyrocketing energy prices. We've seen the impact of the

HST on families in this province. We've seen this government attempt to introduce an eco tax, which they then had to withdraw. So much is happening that is having a negative impact, and yet they choose to devote seven hours to a bill to accomplish nothing more than routine housekeeping.

Then they come up with other ideas. Yesterday, we heard in the morning that the Minister of Health Promotion stated they were going to consider reviewing whether they should ban a chicken sandwich from KFC. Well, of course, as they've done on so many occasions recently, they backtracked, like they did on eco taxes and so many other things. In the afternoon, I guess because the Premier was concerned about being labelled one more time as Premier Dad, someone stated on his behalf that they weren't going to do any more of this social engineering.

Let me simply conclude by saying that this is not a bill about good government. This is a bill that focuses on some very minor issues. It's regrettable that the government didn't introduce a bill that actually was going to improve the economy in the province of Ontario, that was going to demonstrate for the first time that they were actually doing some good planning when it comes to energy. So we won't be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the comments of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I hadn't heard that my colleague from Beaches–East York had referred to this as the much ado about nothing bill, but it's not bad. I had thought the odds and ends bill or the miscellaneous changes and amendments act, 2010. There are a variety of terms one can use for a bill that really does a little bit of housekeeping.

One shouldn't be averse to a bill that does some housekeeping, but to call it the Good Government Act is quite an extraordinary leap of writing skill. It shows imagination on the part of legislative counsel and the minister that I hadn't understood was there previously.

This bill, given a fairly big chunk of legislative time, is an odd thing to put forward in a period, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has said, when we are facing very substantial problems in the province of Ontario around economy, around energy policy, around health care, with just in the last 48 hours more news about the waste of health care dollars going to very high-priced, well-connected lobbyists. Those are the issues that need broader, more substantive debate in this House.

The simple reality is that for us in the NDP, and I imagine in the opposition, the debate we want to carry on is about those more substantial matters, really talking about good government issues in Ontario, making sure that people do have jobs, making sure that people have electricity and other energy at prices that are affordable.

When a government loses its way and spends its time on miscellaneous amendments, you know that the end of that government is near.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's my pleasure to speak to this bill. There's been a lot of talk about the name of this bill, and the name has almost become an issue on this. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Toronto–Danforth spoke. This type of legislation isn't flashy, but it's our job. It's legislation to keep current with the times, remain current, and it's about reviewing what we do.

In my past elected position as a school board chair, we spent a great part of our time reviewing policies. We set in process a process where every five years we reviewed policies at the board level. We found a number of our policies which were out of date, things like if you bring your horse to school, the board must water and feed it. Those were the types of things that came up as being a little out of date.

This is about creating accountability in the system, reviewing what we're doing going forward. This bill includes approximately 70 amendments to legislation from seven different ministries. Most of the provisions are technical, but they change, exact and modernize it and bring it up to speed.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about electricity rates for some reason in this as part of it. I'd just like to remind her that when hydro was sold off by the last government, they sold off the part of hydro that made money, which has created difficulties. We've been spending a lot of money investing in that.

1630

The other day a press release was released in my riding about the 407 and where it will proceed. It is being built and it is moving along. Had it not been sold off by the previous government, the profits wouldn't be sitting in Spain right now. They would have been used to finish the highway.

The other thing is that this bill is about respecting the process. I remember the first budget I got to attend, before I was a member here. I got to go to Magna and witness a budget that had absolutely no respect for this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I enjoyed the speech by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo with regard to Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. As she pointed out, it has been suggested that it be renamed the much ado about nothing act, which would be more representative of what it actually achieves.

She was talking about how this government has demonstrated they aren't a good government. She gave examples of the energy sector, which is an absolute mess at this stage. We saw the very political statement in the 2003 election that they were going to close coal-fired electricity generating plants by 2007. Talk about an irresponsible commitment by the government. Of course, as we know, no coal-fired generating plants have been closed, and it's now 2010. The only coal-fired generating plant that has been closed was closed by the member

from Kitchener–Waterloo when she was Minister of the Environment, and that was the Lakeview generating plant.

This government has not shown that they have a plan in the energy field, for sure. It always seems to be about optics. They want to look green, so they have the Green Energy Act. The one thing that act has done is drive up energy prices. In the energy field generally, they've been very successful at driving up energy prices, but they haven't really dealt with the basic problem of baseload power. They've been elected for seven years, and they haven't made a decision on new nuclear generation. They've talked about shutting down coal, but they haven't found a replacement for that baseload power.

It certainly is not good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: These good government acts, as the members know full well, are housekeeping acts that enable governments to clean up a lot of legislation that, as my colleague mentioned, contains some out-of-date clauses.

But if they insist on bringing up some of these embarrassing things, let's just quickly go over some of the things that happened on the Conservative watch, for which they remain unrepentant, and we must assume that this would be their intent again.

In the last full year of the Harris-Eves government, close to half of Ontario's government ministries blew their budget.

Former MPP Chris Stockwell charged Ontario Power Generation up to \$10,000 in travel expenses for a family vacation to Europe.

Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, Tom Long and Michael Gourley shared \$5.9 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One for everything from communications advice to training programs. In many cases, Hydro One couldn't provide evidence of any work having been done.

The 2003 budget, to which my colleague made reference, not only left the taxpayers of Ontario with a \$5.5-billion hidden deficit, but also cost the same taxpayers \$206,000 to put it on at the Magna plant in Brampton. This included \$98,500 to a private production company for putting on the show and \$2,752 to transport members of the media on a secure bus instead of having them walk into this legislative chamber.

It would be a lot more helpful if, on these housekeeping bills, we simply debated the essence of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Toronto–Danforth and, of course, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

I think what I was trying to point out is the fact that this government has chosen to, I think in many ways, mislead the public in calling it a Good Government Act—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw.

We're basically dealing with a bill that is providing some housekeeping amendments to current legislation, and so there's nothing in here that resembles anything about good government.

I guess I would also say—the member from Mississauga–Streetsville chose to bring up the whole issue of lobbyists. We've had the eHealth billion-dollar boondoggle scandal, and then yesterday we had the office of the Auditor General of Ontario bring forth another condemnation of this government. One of the things that I think was most shocking for people was the fact that there was a consultant who actually received contracts totalling \$608,000, and none of the invoices that were necessary were provided to justify detailed receipts for the \$170,000 in expenses that he claimed or she claimed, and as a result of the audit that was undertaken, when the hospital asked the consultant for additional details regarding these expenses, the hospital didn't get them because the consultant intended to charge a \$3,000 service fee for providing them.

This is absolutely unbelievable. We've seen that most of these consultants are Liberal-friendly. We've seen that many of them were the same ones who benefited from eHealth. So this is not a bill about good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Starting off, I appreciate the commentary of the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock that this bill is what we do, and he raised the whole issue of the title of the bill. I'm going to talk about more substantial issues, but I just want to say that when you bring forward a bill that is entitled the Good Government Act, in standard English one would think that you would have a somewhat more expansive goal. Having a title “an act to deal with miscellaneous amendments to a variety of acts” would have perhaps given us, as opposition, less ammunition to go after the government with.

Having commented on that, I will move on to my larger concerns. This very thin bill, which really does deal with a number of minor amendments to acts, is not, in and of itself, a really bad bill; it's just that it misses the point. In Ontario, we are in a situation where people are very desperate in looking for work, and my guess is that it's true in ridings across this province. Certainly in my riding, people come into my constituency office on a regular basis asking for assistance in finding work. They have gone through university, they have training or they have worked for a decade or two decades in a variety of situations and find that they cannot get employment. That is a huge and pressing issue in this province.

In Ontario, if you have a full-time job and a decent salary, you can live a pretty good life, but if you don't have either of those two things, then life can be extraordinarily difficult. So I think that if you're going to bring forward a bill that deals with good government,

that deals with the larger issues that we face here, it is incumbent upon the government to actually look out for the population as a whole and look out to ensure that there are good jobs for everyone, that people can get work, decent work, well-paid work, so that they can live a life of some dignity and a life of some joy.

In Ontario, we lost 350,000 jobs in the last recession. We've gained back perhaps 140,000 of those. Ontario lost 27,000 jobs last month alone. There is, in fact, a jobs crisis in Ontario that we see in the statistics and we see in the faces of the people who come to see us in our constituency office. It is a real issue. It is one that cannot be ignored. It has substantial consequences.

1640

This bill talking about good government doesn't address that very central question that we face in Ontario today. Ontario's manufacturing and resource regions remain devastated. I don't have to tell anyone in this chamber how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to the people of this province. Those jobs are not just important because manufacturing jobs pay an average of \$2.50 an hour more than the average hourly wage in this province. These jobs are not just important because, in addition to paying better, these jobs also generally come with pensions and good benefits. All this is important, but there's another reason why maintaining and strengthening Ontario's manufacturing and resource sector is crucial.

Dalton McGuinty likes to pretend that the current jobs crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resources represent the foundations on which Ontario's service economy rests. If you have problems in the manufacturing and resource sectors, you will eventually have problems in the retail, financial services and other areas of the service economy.

I remember a story told by the member from Welland, Mr. Kormos, about a year ago about going to a shopping mall in his riding and talking to small business owners, all of whom had for decades been running small, prosperous businesses, serving the needs, serving the requirements of the population in his riding. Those stores continue to be well run, continue to have people in charge of them who are knowledgeable about their products, about their customers, about business itself, but because of the undermining of the manufacturing economy in Welland and the Niagara peninsula, they had no customers. They couldn't sell to each other; that's not enough to keep a store open. They needed that manufacturing base for the economy of their area so that people could live decently and so that they could be customers for those small businesses. That's a fundamental issue for the whole of the economy of this province.

In the end, if you don't ensure that you have a healthy manufacturing and resource sector, then you have a small and diminishing service sector surrounded by a no-growth economy. It means that working people in this province are facing challenges that they have not faced in the past. Actually, I should amend that: People have

faced unemployment before; what they have not faced in many ways is the threat, the fear that in fact that unemployment will not be corrected by a return of the economy, by a rushing back in of the tide of a boom, but that in fact they're facing long-term, perhaps permanent, structural unemployment.

There are fundamental changes taking place in our economy that require innovative, activist government now. Due to the global financial crisis and failed federal and provincial policies, Ontario's economic foundation is threatening to crumble, and I and other New Democrats believe that government must respond. The NDP believes that the government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs and, when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in activist government. Mr. McGuinty has stood on the sidelines, showing absolutely no leadership while factories and mills downsize and close, costing hundreds of thousands of workers their jobs. I repeat: Ontario's economy is bouncing along the bottom because during Dalton McGuinty's watch, quite frankly, Liberals think the market must always be the final arbiter of what jobs survive and what jobs disappear. Well, I'm here to tell you that the NDP doesn't see things that way. We believe that sometimes the market works and sometimes it doesn't. When it doesn't—and this is one of those times in Ontario's economic history when the market definitely isn't working—then government needs to step in on behalf of hard-working men and women and set things right.

Here are just some of the policies the NDP has been fighting for over the past couple of years:

- a buy-Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

- tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing, in addition to longer advance notice and enhanced mandated severance;

- expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advanced notice in mass layoff situations;

- pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they're owed from their employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy;

- the elimination of the HST on hydro, which would allow \$500 million to be put back into the economy to put people back to work.

Those are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in the past few years to deal with Ontario's jobs crisis. Every last one of them has been rejected by the McGuinty government.

I'm not saying that those ideas are the whole story; I think there are a variety of strategies that one can put into

place. But I think that for Ontario today, a government that is not, in fact, actively going out to implement those kinds of policies is selling short the people of Ontario and putting their futures in jeopardy. That is what we need to be debating in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I always enjoy hearing the member for Toronto–Danforth. He made a number of statements with which I must take issue, particularly with regard to the manufacturing sector. No sector has benefited more from the government's sweeping reforms in taxation than the manufacturing sector.

Let's go into some of those ways. Their income taxes are down and their corporate income taxes are reduced. Your personal income taxes are down and down to stay—permanent cuts to your income taxes. The manufacturing sector has seen its small business surtax completely eliminated. Ontario is the only province in Canada to do so. Not even Alberta has done that.

If you're in manufacturing, your paperwork burden has been cut through the complete abolition of the most regressive, obsolete, expensive and cumbersome tax that remained in Ontario, the provincial sales tax, and it has been eliminated, repealed, abolished, gone. It's history; it's over. It won't come back.

Your business costs are down through flowing-through of the input tax credits, and the net result for people in manufacturing these days is sustainable profits, even on the same volume of business and, most importantly, lower prices to you in manufacturing and lower prices to the people who buy from you.

Have you seen all the ads these days in both print and on the radio where people say, "We pay the HST"? Well, that's retail-price-speak for "We have cut your prices." The HST benefit is starting to flow through.

Just to sum up, the member says that the market must be the final arbiter, and actually, we more or less accept that. I'll pick this up at a future time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Toronto–Danforth for his presentation, but I just can't resist responding to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville suggesting that the provincial sales tax is gone. It grew into the massive HST that everyone is paying and everyone is complaining about, and he talks about how the people think it's gone. I can assure the member that he'd better go out and talk to the public and listen to what he's hearing in his local community. There is no one, including small business, talking about the PST being gone. They're all talking about this massive burden of the HST that has fallen upon them.

I do want to say that I find it interesting that this bill is being called the Good Government Act. In fact, it changes a lot of regulations and so forth in 70 items at seven different ministries, and that's supposed to improve government. If that was true, I think we'd all say that was a good idea. Obviously, this government has a

lot of room for improvement, and if there's anything they could bring forward that would do some of that, that would be helpful.

1650

I'm just going through it and looking at some of the things the government has been doing that I thought I would see in this bill; that would be corrected. One was, in the Green Energy Act, taking away the planning authority from municipalities. This was supposedly, according to them, making good government, but the only reason they say it's good government is because they don't trust municipalities to make planning decisions in their own communities when it comes to where they want the green energy. They say, "Oh, the municipalities wanted that because they want to have some expedience here. We want to get it done with none of this NIMBY stuff. We know better than the municipalities." But every municipality that looked at it passed a resolution opposing what the government was doing.

I don't think it's creating better government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wanted to support the comments made by my friend from Toronto–Danforth. I also wanted to commend the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because he is the chief stentorian for the Liberal Party. He is the ultimate cheerleader for the Liberals. He's a real trouper. In fact, he's a prime candidate for watching mixed martial arts, as I see it—and the Liberals are about to introduce that, so God bless; you're going to be enjoying it a whole lot.

Back to the member from Toronto–Danforth: He's speaking to the fears of every working man and woman in Ontario. There's nothing good about this bill, and there's not much good about this good government. What the member from Toronto–Danforth is talking about is expressing the worries about how close working men and women are to losing that paycheque and, as a result, losing their homes. That's how close people are. People are worried sick about not being able to make ends meet, and you have got chief cheerleaders of the Liberal Party here today talking about all the great things you're doing. Yet you have got extremes here in Ontario, from the very wealthy to the majority of everybody else, profoundly worried that they can't make ends meet. What the member from Toronto–Danforth is talking about is something Liberals should be wary of and be afraid of and should be thinking about as they introduce legislation that addresses those fears, as opposed to this housekeeping bill that does absolutely nothing. Why would you call it the Good Government Act when there's nothing in it for anyone?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Oxford and Trinity–Spadina for speaking up.

I want to make sure that the record is very clear. I don't believe that the market must be the final arbiter

when it comes to employment. We cannot rest everything on the tender mercies of the market if we want to have a civilized nation. It's as simple as that. I think there was some confusion. Maybe my friend who is operating the microphone systems blurred for just a moment as a way of giving comfort to the Liberal government; I don't know. But it was misheard. I want to make it very clear: The market cannot be the final arbiter of the decisions that are made in this society if we want to have a civilized society.

The member from Mississauga—Streetsville talked about the removal of a provincial sales tax from industry and the benefit it gives to manufacturing. Well, I'm not sure if he was there at estimates—he may well have been—but I actually had an opportunity to go through all of the sectors of the economy that got a boost, if you will, from the tax cut they received when the PST, the provincial sales tax, was removed. Manufacturing got the smallest, or pretty close to the smallest. So if you're talking about manufacturing in this province, the HST, for it, was a side note. What manufacturers need is the ability to invest in new equipment so that they can be more productive. The HST introduction didn't help them that way. What it did, in fact, was undermine the confidence of people who are going out and buying goods in this province. It undermined consumers' confidence. No one should be surprised that it had a negative impact on economic growth in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

As some of the other speakers have said, we do question the naming of this bill, calling it the good government bill, particularly when we look at the record of the McGuinty government.

Let's take a look at their record for good government. Is it good government this year, in the financial year we've just gone through, to be running a \$19.3-billion deficit in 2009-10? That's what the deficit ended up being. It did change a lot as we went through the year. It started out at \$14 billion, went to \$18 billion, then up to \$24 billion, then down to \$21.3 billion, and finally, they were pleased to see that it was only \$19.3 billion. Is that good government, to be spending that much more money than you actually are taking in?

In addition to that deficit, the government actually borrowed \$35.2 billion this past year—\$35.2 billion was the addition to the debt. Of course, the government's on track to more than double the debt by 2012-13.

They don't have a credible plan to balance the budget. The plan is to balance the budget by 2017. That's beyond two elections. I don't think that's good government, to be burdening the pages and young people of this province with all this additional debt. Future taxes is what that debt is going to be.

Let's look at what's going on in England right now. They put off some tough decisions, so now they're looking at a 20% cut in their budgets. They're looking at

firing some 180,000 public servants. Is that what we want to wait to get to in the province of Ontario before the McGuinty government actually acts to deal with the situation they're creating?

Let's also realize that the situation here in Ontario is not so much that we don't have revenue; we've got lots of revenue. In fact, this year, the year we're in right now, 2009-10, the projected revenues are \$107 billion, and that's a record. The problem is that the government's looking at spending \$127 billion, so they're going to add another \$20 billion to the debt in addition to whatever capital spending they do as well.

Do we need to get to the point of Greece, which is essentially bankrupt, and have protests on the streets before we deal with this situation we have in the province of Ontario? The longer the government waits to start to try to be responsible and tackle the problem, the worse it gets.

As I tend to do first thing in the morning, this morning I again was listening to Michael Hlinka, the CBC business commentator. He was talking about England and Ontario and saying that a responsible government would look at starting to reduce salaries, he suggested, by 2% for the province of Ontario. Frankly, half the budget is salaries, so unless you're willing to start to look at that, you're not being responsible.

What has this government done? They have rewarded virtually all the negotiating groups with increases of 2%, 3%, 4%. I've seen some offers of over 5% this year, for one year. Is that responsible when you have a \$20-billion deficit? I do not think so. But that is what this government is doing and has done. As I say, half the Ontario budget is wages, so that is just simply not responsible when you have the situation that we find ourselves in, with a \$20-billion deficit.

1700

Look at what was in the news today and yesterday. You'd think the government would have learned from the eHealth situation, where a lot of money has been spent—up to \$1 billion—with very little to show for it. The shame with that—it was in our election campaign, actually—is that electronic health records can make a real difference in the health system, in terms of making the system more efficient and getting more efficient use of dollars so that people get the care they need. But this government has wasted a lot of money on consultants with very little to show for it on eHealth. That was documented a year ago by the Auditor General in his report on eHealth.

Yesterday, we had the Auditor General doing his report, which I have before me: Special Report, October 2010, Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations. I note that Karen Howlett of the Globe and Mail, writing about it in today's paper, points out:

"The auditor's findings, released on Wednesday, demonstrate that Premier Dalton McGuinty has failed to impose an era of restraint within the public sector....

"In his report, Mr. McCarter cites examples where consultants billed hospitals for a business trip to Singapore at a cost of \$700 a night for a hotel room, \$7,800 in

airfare for a personal vacation in Japan, and a \$350 dinner in Toronto for three people. One consultant even tried to bill a hospital a service fee of \$3,000 when the auditor asked for receipts to support expenses totalling \$170,000."

This is outrageous, and this is after eHealth; this is a year after. She goes on to say in her article:

"The findings, he said, are reminiscent of eHealth Ontario, which awarded contracts totalling hundreds of millions of dollars to consultants without competitive tenders. The eHealth scandal dominated media coverage of Ontario politics in the summer of 2009 and led Health Minister David Caplan to resign from cabinet."

A quote from Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General: "'I was a bit surprised that eHealth had not been a wakeup call for hospitals to tighten up their procedures,' Mr. McCarter told reporters."

It points out that there's been very, very little oversight by the government, despite having wasted so much money on the eHealth scandal. I would really like to know—and I'm sure we'll eventually find out through freedom of information—just who the consultant was who had the gall to do this. I'll read from the report:

"Another hospital awarded a consultant three single-sourced contracts and three follow-on contracts from 2007 to 2009, totalling \$608,000, to review the hospital's finances in order to address a budget shortfall and implement recommendations made in the consultant's earlier work. None of the invoices we sampled from this consultant included detailed receipts or justification for the \$170,000 in expenses claimed. As a result of our audit, the hospital asked the consultant for additional details regarding these expenses. The hospital did not get the receipts because the consultant intended to charge a \$3,000 service fee for providing them."

That is outrageous. They had \$170,000 in expenses and wouldn't provide any receipts. Then, when they're asked for receipts, they want to charge \$3,000. I would really like to know who this consultant is. They aren't named in the report, but I would be very interested to see—and I'm sure we'll be making a request through freedom of information to find out—who this consultant was, because that is absolutely outrageous.

We have another situation: "In April 2006, a hospital single-sourced the engagement of a consulting firm to develop and implement a health information management system. During the first three years, the firm was paid \$398 per hour—\$2.6 million in total—and no fixed ceiling price or specific project deliverables were established. The invoices provided no detail on services rendered or any project accomplishments."

That is a shocking lack of oversight.

The sad part of this is that this is money, when we have scarce health care dollars, that should be going to front-line services. In my riding, Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has a deficit situation now. They've done all kinds of paring down. Closing the cafeteria was the most recent thing they did. They shut down the Burk's Falls health centre. There have been all sorts of cutbacks, but they still have a big deficit. This money could have been

going toward real health services, toward nurses and doctors, toward that deficit so that no more cuts have to happen. Instead, there's been a shocking lack of oversight and very little to see—and I would recommend that everyone read this special report of the Auditor General. But it certainly demonstrates that this government has not been doing a good job. It has not been providing good government, so the name of this bill, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts—it's certainly something we would like to rename, because it does not demonstrate what the bill is truly about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to support everything that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has said. He makes reference to the Auditor General for good reasons, because the Auditor General has exposed the fact that this government has wasted so much of the public's money. And how have they wasted the public's money? By not having adequate oversight over the very institutions that they should have oversight of: those institutions that get public dollars and that have been spending millions of dollars on lobbyists to lobby government—for what? What does that get them, except—if you're a friend of the Liberal government, you get to have a meeting, and the lobbyists get to say to the hospital board, "Yeah, I got you a meeting." And you've got to pay big bucks for that kind of stuff. What's that about? Why would the government let this go on for seven painful, long years?

When the member from Kenora–Rainy River introduces a resolution today that says that we should have oversight and we should be able to ask questions of the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator of Ontario—because they're going to be spending \$26 billion over the next 40 years and we don't have a clue how they're going to be spending that money. We can't even ask them questions. When he raises that point and brings forth a resolution—supported by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I would add, and not supported by any Liberal—when we bring forth such suggestions and offer the possibility, the opportunity, to the Liberals to support a resolution that, in my mind, was very practical and reasonable, they all opposed it. Not even one Liberal supported a resolution that would say, "Yeah, we're a good government and we want transparency." Not one Liberal supported the member from Kenora–Rainy River when he called for transparency and accountability. It's not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: There's one aspect of the plus seven hours of debate that I can agree with the two opposition parties on, and that's that we could rightly move on to a more substantive piece of legislation for debate. But it seems that the opposition wants to spend plus seven hours, for the most part, maligning the current government, and that's fine. That's okay. But if you want to move on to substantive debate, then you have to move

on to substantive debate. You can't stand up for over seven hours and say that the bill has nothing in it and that we should be doing something else and then continue to stand to debate a bill that, to your preference, has nothing in it.

There are 70 amendments to seven different acts. If you took 10 minutes for each one or six minutes for each one, you've used up the seven hours—the point being that I think many of us in this place are ready to vote on the Good Government Act and move on from there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his presentation on the bill that's before us here. Obviously, it isn't the fluff in the bill that we want to talk about; it's the inability of the government to become a good government by using this bill. You've got to do a lot more than this bill will do to turn what you've been doing into good government, and I think that's really what I'm trying to say.

I think it's rather interesting, because good government—if you're changing from where you are to good government—would imply that the government is going to do a little better at their job. Now, this bill was all ready for debate when the auditor's report came out yesterday; it was already here. What it points out is that the government really does need to improve.

When the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care got this report about the hospitals and the LHINs, she said, "Oh, my gosh. That's just unacceptable. I didn't know it was going on." Well, wait a minute. Aren't they both responsible to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care? Good government would mean that she knew what was happening in the ministry. It's been going on for the seven years that this government has been there. As was suggested, it's likely been there longer than that, but it has been there before. The minister said, "I didn't know it was going on."

1710

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned a number of issues. One I found that was very interesting is that the LHIN, the local health integration network, "also made a payment of over \$23,000 to a consultant in March 2009, before any work was commenced. Although the payment had been made in anticipation of the completion of the work before the end of the same month, no work had been completed at the time of our visit, nine months later. Subsequently the LHIN cancelled the project and initiated efforts to recover the payment." However, as of July, no recovery had been made.

So all of a sudden, we've just totally forgotten about money we paid in advance of any work being done. That's not what you call good government, or good business for that matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's always a delight to listen to the contribution by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka to debates of this type. I listened carefully to his comments today, and he's spot on, bang on.

The Liberal government seems a little tired; they want to go home. It's 5 o'clock and it's Thursday. Jeez. Why do they have to stay here? Gosh. Because this is what you get paid to do, for Pete's sake. They're your constituents. You, the Liberal backbenchers, your constituents should know why you support this good government bill.

I say to the member from Barrie, why aren't you explaining to your constituents here in the chamber why you support this bill? I say to the member from Willowdale, why don't you, right here in the chamber, speak to this bill and explain why you're supporting it? I say to the member for Guelph that she surely should be standing here in the chamber and explaining to people why she supports the bill. I say to the member for Sault Ste. Marie, surely you should be standing up in this chamber and explaining why you support this bill. I say to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, surely you should be standing up in this chamber and explaining why you support this bill. I say to the member for Oakville, surely he would want to participate in this debate and explain to his folks why he supports this bill. I say to the member for Brampton West, surely you would want to stand up in this chamber.

You were elected to come here to debate these issues. Your government put forward this bill, calling it a good government bill. Surely, I say to the member for Niagara Falls, he should be standing up in this chamber and explaining to the people of Niagara Falls why he supports this bill, and I assume if he doesn't support it, say so.

The thing we do know is that people don't support you, the Liberals. Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians, almost nine out of 10—it doesn't get much bigger than that—say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, and 76% of Ontarians think it's time to have another party in power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to respond to the members who commented: the member from Trinity–Spadina, the member from Pickering–Scarborough East, the member from Oxford and the member from Welland.

The member from Trinity–Spadina was talking about the Auditor General's report. It brings back memories of another Auditor General's report, and that is the one he did on the OLG and expenses at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., which was just as shocking. You'd think by now the government would be learning, because in that report, I think one of the most shocking things was again the lack of oversight. The OLG actually asked the minister responsible if the expense rules applied to them, and the minister never responded. So the OLG took that to mean that the expense rules didn't apply to them.

As his report in that case pointed out, they had \$60,000 automobiles that were leased when the government limit is about \$30,000. They had their conference in-house. They hired a consultant for a three-day conference at \$150,000 to host a conference at one of their own facilities. It went on and on and on with all kinds of

broken expense rules, but that was just another example of a shocking lack of oversight.

We saw here this afternoon an example of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills speaking up for his constituents and lobbying here, as the Minister of Health recommended, instead of using paid consultants, which was the focus of the Auditor General's report. But then the government members vote down his resolution to try to support his local hospitals. That seems to be a message that, yes, you do need these paid lobbyists, because they aren't listening to the MPPs as recommended by the Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to speak to G110, the Good Government Act. I remember a time when a former government that shall remain nameless used to have the best bill titles, but the Liberals compete. You guys compete really well.

Mr. Norm Miller: What's a better name for this bill?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There is. Let me suggest to you what the better name would have been. Had they named it differently, I would have had a hard time making fun of this bill. If they had named it the housekeeping amendment act, I would have had no problem with it. Member from Ajax–Pickering?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Yes, can I help you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He's too busy. Oh, you're here? There you are. Where do we have him? Pickering–Scarborough East. That's where he is.

Mr. Joe Dickson: That's right beside my riding.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're close.

Mr. Joe Dickson: We're tight, like this.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. If you guys had called this the housekeeping amendment bill, it would have been easy. I think we would have—

Mr. Jim Brownell: No, you still would have had something to say about it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're right. We would have attacked it, but with less humour. I would have had a hard time making fun of you. But when you call this bill the Good Government Act, it appeals to me a great deal because then I need to have some fun.

What's good about it? What is good about this bill? Other than your calling it good, there's nothing good in it.

What's a good government? Let me try to explain what I think a good government is.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Willowdale, he's going to throw you out. You're always being threatened to be thrown out. You've got to be careful.

Member from Willowdale, what's a good government?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'm just going to remind the honourable member before this goes too far to direct your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, of course. Sorry for not looking at you when I said that. I always mean to, but it's just hard sometimes, because you want to speak directly to the members. But I understand, Mr. Speaker.

Good government, in my mind, is not having a big lineup at the food banks. That would be good government. Food banks have grown under a Liberal regime. How could that be? Member from Willowdale, how could you be happy about it? Does that warm your heart? Does it warm your heart to have long lineups at the food banks, more and more people using food banks than ever before? How do you sleep at night? How can you call yourself a good government? You'd believe that if you were a good government—better than the previous one that you want to attack from now until the next election—surely you would do something about that. But you haven't.

You have done absolutely nothing except appeal to more and more people out there, the good citizens, to give more and more to charity. There's the United Way appeal every year. They're raising more and more money. And Liberals are happy to praise volunteers who are raising more money. Liberals are happy to give them trophies for donating their time and donating more and more money, because the more and more people give, the less governments give. The more people volunteer—three million or more—the less governments have to do.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What does it have to do with this bill? It's the good government bill. That's the point. If you hadn't called it the good government bill, I wouldn't have been able to talk about it. But when you talk about good government, in my mind, what would be a good government? It would be that we have fewer people lining up at the food banks. More and more people who are going to food banks are not just people with a mental illness, not just real people with real poverty issues, but you've got a whole lot of middle-income people slipping through the cracks, who are having to rely on the goodness of people who give them some charity. No longer can we go and rely on governments to give anymore; we have to go and rely on the kindness of strangers.

1720

Oh, yes, we give them a charitable tax receipt so that 30% of their money goes back into their pocket through the kindness of governments, but that's about all they get. They have to go through charity; they have to beg for food. While some politicians attack them for, of course, being on social assistance, they have to go begging for food. There's nothing good about this government when it allows that. When 140,000 people are waiting for housing because they can't afford the rents in rental buildings, because they can't afford to buy condominiums, when 140,000 people in Ontario are still waiting for support from the government to build good housing that they can live in, that they can afford, it's not a good government.

That's why if you called it a housekeeping amendment act, it would have been fine and easy. But it makes people like me talk about why you're not such a great government, why you are not so good.

When students have tuition debt of \$25,000 a year, it's not a good government. When those debts keep going up and up and up, it's not good. When to be a lawyer, you have to have \$100,000 in debts, it's not a good government. When you want to be doctor, and your total debt at the end of it is probably \$100,000 to \$120,000, it's not a good government. It makes it possible for the wealthy to continue being doctors and lawyers, but for those who would aspire to be a lawyer or a doctor and whose incomes are not very high and who are afraid of debt and know that they won't be able to pay it off that easily, and you're shutting them out of those possibilities, that's not a good government.

When you introduce a harmonized sales tax that whacks, badly and hard, middle-class men and women and families—

Mr. Charles Sousa: Creates jobs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —in a way that it's just a big weight on their shoulders, it's not a good government.

The member from Mississauga South and other Liberals claim that it creates jobs when they know the GST did nothing of the sort, and they know that it will not create those jobs except to rely on some fabricated evidence from some economist that they didn't like and that they now like, who says to them they are going to create 650,000 jobs. Then they say, "Yeah, that's okay."

A lot of Liberals fought against the GST until Chrétien got into power and said, "No, the GST is okay now." But they knew it would hurt a whole lot of Canadians, and it did. A whole lot of jobs got lost. You would think that with the GST—the member from Mississauga South, the former banker, loves it. You would think that with the GST having been introduced—and the total cost, the total income to government, is about 30 billion bucks. You would presume that this would be a big benefit to business, and as such, because of the savings for business, you would think there would be thousands and thousands of jobs in perpetuity in Ontario and the rest of Canada, and yet unemployment has been steadily high—under Liberals to boot; high under Conservatives—with a GST regime that the member from Mississauga South said is going to create jobs. Okay.

Yeah, we've been seeing a whole lot of jobs in Canada since the GST, and we're going to, oh, yes, see a whole lot of jobs with the HST. That's okay for those of us who earn over \$100,000. It's okay for bankers whose income is \$1 million, \$1.5 million, plus cozy houses and cozy cars and cozy shares in their banks, but it's not good for middle-income families that earn \$40,000 or \$35,000 or \$50,000 or \$60,000; it's not good for them. There is absolutely nothing good in this bill—nothing.

This is not a good government. I want to remind my progressive friends: This is not a good government. They might be nicer than the previous regime, but there's nothing good about this government, nothing that I can

say—at least, that comes to mind—that I could praise you for—not much.

You've got to rename this bill if you want me to support it. Otherwise, I'm going to make fun of you for as long as I can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to add a couple of minutes' comments to my good friend from Trinity-Spadina. But before I go there, I just want to comment that the member from Welland, his colleague, stood up a few minutes ago, pointing out people who should be here debating this bill, and he's quite right.

The fact is, I think I've been here a good part of the seven-or-so hours that we've been debating—not all the time—and I'm not sure any of the members from the opposition talked about the bill. They didn't talk about the bill, about how this is a way to streamline government, how this is way to do those things to make sure that we get up to today's standards.

The member from Trinity-Spadina spoke, and I want to make a couple of comments on what he spoke about. He talked about the unemployment rate under this government; he talked about the unemployment rate under the previous regime, the Conservatives. He didn't talk about the unemployment under his regime, which doesn't exist anymore. That doesn't exist anymore.

I do, though, want to give him credit. I think the member from Welland would say that I should give him credit. I will give him credit that he did say this regime is better than the previous regime. I want to thank you for that. I want to compliment you.

I think we debated the bill—the bill is very technical in nature—to talk about things that we're trying to improve.

Laughter.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: To the members opposite that might be funny, and that's fine; that's the way they take it. But I'm not sure that many of them talked about the content of the bill. That's what is disheartening. I just hope, at the end of the day, they will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond briefly to the member for Trinity-Spadina, and I want to compliment him on his remarks. They were interesting, thoughtful and lively, as always, and theatrical too. He does a great job of representing his constituents. I probably should take this opportunity to thank the New Democrats for their support of my private member's resolution this afternoon.

It's interesting we're talking about a bill called the Good Government Act. We saw this afternoon a very interesting display of anything but good government, I thought. Again, and I've read this into the House a couple of times, I don't know if any of the government members have read the Toronto Star today, perhaps, but in the clippings today there's an article by Jim Coyle where the Minister of Health is quoted as saying, "Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the

hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have, and that's their MPPs."

This afternoon, I had an opportunity to bring forward my private member's resolution—perhaps the last one I'll have before the election, because the election is expected in October of next year. I thought, given the fact that I've been working for years to try to advocate for the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus, and more recently, when I was informed of the needs of the Georgetown Hospital, I put the two together and asked for the support of this Legislature for the hospital projects that we need.

Interestingly, on the very day of the debate of the resolution and the vote in the House, the minister is quoted as saying that that's our role as MPPs. Our role is to advocate for our constituents, to advocate for our hospitals. Then we come into the House this afternoon and the government member speaks to the motion and starts complaining about process. It's just unbelievable.

For the government to take an approach in this House this afternoon to bring forward—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member is not in his seat so he can't raise a point of order from there. Thank you.

The honourable member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —incredible amount of gall. I can't believe they'd bring forward this bill this afternoon with a straight face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is a sad moment, because here's a government that's trying to pull the wool over people's eyes. Here's a government that's trying to have its way with people.

They're shutting down emergency rooms down in Fort Erie and Port Colborne. They're telling seniors that they've got to pay HST on their electricity and on all sorts of services that these folk never had to pay taxes on before. They're telling workers that they're going to have to trade in their good jobs, the 300,000 of them that have been lost through the McGuinty government years, for \$10-an-hour jobs. You don't send kids to college or university for \$10 an hour.

1730

New Democrats are going to make sure this bill goes to committee. I suspect it's going to go to a vote tonight.

The reality is that opposition members have been prepared to debate this; government members haven't. The government says, "Seven hours." Seven hours? You've got 107 members here. This is supposed to be a place of discourse, of exchange, of debate. The government members want nothing to do with discourse, exchange and debate. They adopt tactics that are akin to totalitarian in nature. They expect bills simply to proceed through here because, well, Liberals wrote them. The people of Ontario know better. Why, 76% of Ontarians know better, because 76% of Ontarians believe they would like to see another party in power—somebody other than the Liberals—and 86% of Ontarians know

better because, you see, 86% of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago.

Good government doesn't have darned near nine out of 10 people saying, "You've made my life harder. You've made my life more miserable. You've made my life more difficult." That's what people are saying about Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, and they know it. Almost nine out of 10: Think about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to take a couple of moments and just speak to the good government bill, because, in fact, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't a good government.

A couple of things have been mentioned over the course of the day and prior to that. Affordable housing was one. We're trying to catch up from the good old days of another party. I can tell you, in Durham region there are five projects under way right now, one of them across from my constituency office: 84 new units which will be for those most in need and, of course, for a large proportion of seniors.

I must tell you, fellow members, that my colleague from Pickering—Scarborough East and the Premier and I were on a tour a week ago Monday. One of the spots we went to was in Whitby, the riding of one of our good members. We went to a plant called ASC Signal. This corporation, which is part of a worldwide conglomerate, did something unique. We've been talking about lost jobs and we've been talking about revenue. We've been talking about a lack of jobs. This corporation, because their number one priority was to have a government with HST, a combined tax, a savings on tax, a refund on corporate tax—they have acquired that location, they have maintained the business, they have maintained all of the employees, and they have gone to Mexico and brought back a production line to Ontario. I'll tell you, there's something special about our employees, something special about a lot of things, when we're now bringing jobs from other countries back to Ontario because of our good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Trinity—Spadina has two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My thanks to my good friends, including the members from Ajax—Pickering and Northumberland—Quinte West.

Just to continue with my theme, would a good government have a \$20-billion deficit? I remember a time when Liberals were here and would say, "Oh, they hit the debt wall. Ontario is about to disappear under the weight of its debt." There was a time when Liberals used to say that, but now that they have a \$20-billion debt, "Well, it's a recession." I see.

Would a good government allow the loss of 350,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, most of them unionized, that made it possible for men and women to live a middle-class life that many aspire to? Would a good government allow that? That's under a Liberal regime.

Would a good government allow more and more people who need home care, as more and more people

become old and infirm—would a good government allow more and more of them not be able to access the home care that they desperately need to stay at home, something Liberals say they want? Yet more and more seniors are getting less and less support from this fine Liberal good government.

Would a good government allow hydro rates to go through the roof as middle-class men and women are finding it harder and harder to be able to pay the bills, as our leader, Andrea Horwath, constantly makes reference to—to people across the land who are saying, “We can’t afford those rates”? It’s not a good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to speak to Bill 110, the so-called Good Government Act. When I first saw the bill introduced, I saw the title and I thought they must be repealing the fixed election dates to give the people in Ontario a say in whether we should have the HST or not. But then, of course, it was another one of those disappointments as I look at what this government does. That wasn’t part of the bill.

The omnibus bill affects about 70 items of legislation from seven different ministries. The government talks about this bill being introduced to enhance the Open for Business legislation that was introduced lately and to enhance jobs and growth in Ontario. If only that were true. But I think we have to kind of pause and look at the bill to see if that’s actually what it does.

Whether it is forcing industrial wind farms in rural communities or banning chocolate milk in school cafeterias, this government is expanding its Dalton-knows-best approach throughout Ontario. They’re not looking for better government; they’re looking for greater government control of everything that happens in our province.

This morning I had the opportunity to speak to another piece of legislation that fits in this series of these types of bills, the Open for Business legislation. I spoke to the agriculture part of it for a reason. Being the critic for agriculture, I thought it was appropriate to look at what impact that bill would have on it. It changes the Live-stock, Poultry and Honey Bee Protection Act, and the government used this bill to create the situation where they no longer have to pay for predator damage, livestock damage by wildlife.

The minister says, “No, no, but that’s not what we’re doing. What we’re really doing is, we’re going to be able to set the price, so when the farmers want more money, we can just raise the price without changing any regulations, because we will control the actual payout.” It used to say that the minister “shall” make the payout, and now the act says that the minister “may” make a payout, and we all know that when they’re looking to reduce the cost of the ministry budget, if they may, they likely won’t. If they wanted to, they would leave the word “shall.”

One of the more concerning elements of this legislation—again, it deals with the one this morning—is the abandonment of cabinet scrutiny. If you look at the legislation, you find there’s a great emphasis on taking

away the Lieutenant Governor’s authority to pass regulations and passing that to the minister. If you look at the bill, in schedule 5, the act is amended—and I just want to read a part; this is under the Ministry of Government Services. I just wanted to also point out that we haven’t heard much debate about the bill because there really hasn’t been much in the bill to debate, so we’ve seen quite general comments about what is not good about the government. But I do want to focus a little bit on what’s actually in the bill:

“The act is amended to transfer seven regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council to the minister. The act is also amended to provide the minister with regulation-making powers to prescribe documents that are required to accompany articles and applications under the act, and to prescribe requirements for the execution of certain documents filed with the director under the act. The regulation-making power of the minister to prescribe forms and provide for their use is transferred to the director.”

So now we have taken it away from cabinet, first the Lieutenant Governor of cabinet to the minister, the minister to the deputy minister, and now it is down to the director, where they’re going to make all the change.

The reason I point this out is that we see, in this report that we got from the Auditor General yesterday, that the big problem is that the minister’s oversight was insufficient to know what was going on in the ministry. At least, the auditor didn’t say she didn’t have oversight; the minister said she didn’t have oversight. The auditor said it has been going on for some time and there’s a lot of money disappearing for things that are not provable and there are no receipts for, and the minister said, “Oh, I didn’t know that was going on.” So this takes away even more of that and gives that power further down the line.

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The Business Corporations Act currently permits the minister to delegate his or her duties and powers under the act to public servants in the ministry. I would think that would be enough delegation, but the act is “amended to allow the minister to delegate these duties or powers to any public servant employed under part III of the Public Service of Ontario Act.” Now we’ve gone from cabinet to the Lieutenant Governor to the minister to the deputy minister, down to the director, and now the director can pass it on to anyone in the province who works for the province. I just don’t think that’s what you call good government, to abdicate one’s responsibilities. I suppose the next time an auditor’s report comes out like this one—and obviously they’re doing very little to change that. They didn’t change it when they had the eHealth problem. They aren’t likely to change it when the same problem comes out this year. But the next time it comes out, the minister won’t have to say, “Oh, I didn’t know that.” She will be able to say, “No, but that was delegated to the person working in the office in Woodstock, and they must have delegated it somewhat differently than I had hoped they would, so we’ll speak to them. If you want to hold someone responsible, that’s the person you should be holding responsible.”

It goes further, as I said, about the director under the Extra-Provincial Corporations Act: "The act currently permits the director under the act to delegate his or her duties or powers under the act to any public servant in the ministry. The act is amended to allow the director to delegate these duties or powers to any public servant employed" under the public service act. They don't even have to delegate it to their own ministry. At some point in time, I suppose we could direct it all to one person and then send them on vacation and there would be absolutely nobody left to be responsible for the problems that occurred.

So I think it's very important that we look at the fact that the government seems to want to take away their responsibility to make any decisions at all. It still gives them the power to make decisions, but they always have a finger to point at someone else.

Of course, all this delegation allows the red tape and the problems that industry has been telling us all along there's too much of. If there's one problem, when you talk to the community and the small business sector, it's always the amount of red tape. This will allow red tape to be created by everybody in the system, and they can have their own regulations as they think they need it.

One of the other things that the delegation does is, as I said this morning to the Minister of Agriculture—and I appreciate that she was here to listen to my presentation about the Open for Business Act. It comes out that under this change, she will be able to delegate authority down to other people. When the farmers come forward and say, "We need this, this and this," the minister will say, "Well, you'll have to speak to so-and-so because they now have the power to do that"—again, no responsibility to them.

The other thing that I think is very important, and the Premier did this himself just a few weeks ago—on July 1 when the HST came in place, we'll all remember there was also an extra charge, an eco tax, added on to some 9,000 purchases, if you wanted to make them all that day. We go back to the delegation: The first thing that was said by the government was, "We didn't know that was happening. What are these people doing? It's not a tax; it's a fee. It's someone at arm's length from the government that's doing this." It was rather strange when it didn't go over very well. It got so bad that in fact the retailers refused to collect it. Then the Premier said, "Oh, this must be going wrong. We'd better suspend it for a while to see what's going on." One would have to question: If they didn't have any authority and didn't know what was being put in place, then how did they have the ability to suspend it? Well, obviously they had authority to put it in, and it turns out now, from reports I've heard, that in fact the Premier was the one who suggested that this is what should happen and this is how we should pay for the recycling process in the province of Ontario. That didn't go over very well and that didn't point toward good government, so they decided that maybe what they should do is just put it all on the backs of municipalities and they will then, in turn, see if they can get some other way to fund their blue box program.

I just want to point out that it's things like the eco tax and the HST—people speak loudly and clearly that that's not what they want. The government first tried to do it with the bill, to say, "It's not what you think it is. It's all optics. You just think it's bad for you. We will pass the bill and call it the good government bill, and then you will all be happy with us."

The truth of the matter is that they can't make good government by passing a bill. They have to do things differently and listen to the people when they do things. Don't implement something and then look at the collateral damage, shall we say. They should look at it all and see what the good and bad of it is, and make decisions in a way that will improve our economy and improve the confidence of our consumers, and not just having to put things in place just so tomorrow we have to change them. That's no way to run a government. It doesn't matter how many bills of good government you pass; if that's the way you're going to conduct your business, the people will not see that as a good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Oxford makes a strong point, one that has been made by opposition members during the course of this debate. It is that this Bill 110 incorporates that growing trend for a government to distance itself from decision-making and, more importantly, to entirely eliminate any safeguards that could possibly be there in the process of decision-making.

For example, taking the power away from the Lieutenant Governor in Council and giving it to the minister himself or herself: At the very least, when it's with the Lieutenant Governor in Council—regulation-making power, for instance—there are a number of cabinet ministers sitting at the table. Presumably, or at least in theory, one or two could caution his or her colleagues and say, "This is a dangerous course to travel," or "It's a slippery slope." Lord knows it didn't happen with the whacky G20 regulation, did it? Not a single cabinet minister warned his or her colleagues that this was going to come back to bite them in the britches and that all hell was going to break loose. You want to hear a report? Man, wait until you get André Marin's report on that G20 regulation—you know, the one that the government embraced so warmly when he applied for his second term, the one that at the end of the day, the government House leader—I believe she had tears in her eyes when he was sitting up in the Speaker's gallery. I presume they were tears of joy, when Marin's reappointment was announced here in the chamber.

Wait until that Ombudsman's report comes forward, over the course of the next few weeks, about the mystery around the G20 regulation, the regulation that misled police officers, misled the public and misled, certainly, members of the Legislature; the one that resulted in hundreds of people getting arrested, most of them with no charges, and when there were charges, most of those charges are now being dropped in the first or second instance of court appearances. What a mess.

That's not good government; that's not good government at all. Passing Bill 110 ain't going to change the colour of that bill from white to black or black to white.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I am struck by the PCs' note of faultlessness in their comments this afternoon as they portray themselves as the guardians of good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I just ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr. David Zimmer: I withdraw that.

I'm reminded of two quotes: "Methinks the lady doth protest too much," said Shakespeare; and a second: "People living in glass houses should not throw stones."

When the member from Oxford was the Minister of Agriculture, he gave a consulting contract to Mariposa Communications. Their principal was a major PC donor and the contract was \$465,000.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, when she was at education in 2002: \$257,000 to Decima Research and a known Conservative principal, Allan Gregg. Again, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, when she was at environment in 2000: \$63,000 to Dillon Consulting, a prominent PC firm. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, again, two years later at environment: \$188,000 to Knowles consulting. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, again, in 2000: \$113,000 to Rhodes Consulting and none other than Paul Rhodes, a PC Party insider. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, again, a couple of years later, 2002, at environment: \$216,000 to Shore Consulting. And finally, in 1998, \$66,000 to Veritas Communications, a major PC Party donor.

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Not to be outdone, the former member from Leeds-Grenville, who has since left this place and has now been elevated to a Progressive Conservative senator in Ottawa: When he was at public safety and correctional services in 2002, \$166,000 went to Andersen Consulting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech by the member for Oxford on Bill 110. I have to start out by saying, on the member from Willowdale's comment, I didn't know Allan Gregg was a Conservative, but I guess he knows that. That's interesting.

Returning to the member from Oxford's comments, he was looking at the bill and actually commenting about aspects of the bill, in particular concerns about the changing authority, the fact that the bill would be delegating authority from the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is cabinet, to the minister, and then the minister, in fact, could pass it down the food chain to the director and members, even if they aren't within the same ministry. He was talking about a part of that.

Obviously, with this government's record of lack of oversight, as demonstrated over and over again, most recently in the report by the Auditor General yesterday on consultant use in selected health organizations, and a year ago, of course, in the report on eHealth, and prior to

that, the report on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—there have been many examples.

The member from Oxford gave us an example of the poor government of the McGuinty Liberals, the eco tax. Boy, that certainly is an example of a new measure that just was not very well thought out. It was introduced quietly, sneakily, on July 1, the same day that the HST was coming in, without any promotion about it. In fact, people just started going to Canadian Tire and buying things and wondering what this new charge was on their bill. The problem was that it had nothing to do with actually improving the environment. There was no communication about this fee and no connection to it actually making a difference in terms of diverting toxic substances from landfill sites. So we had this tax. They bungled virtually every aspect of it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased just to add a few comments and to congratulate my colleague on his comments regarding this legislation that we're currently debating. We've come to the conclusion, I think, on the opposition side, that instead of the good government bill, it should probably be entitled the much ado about nothing bill.

I was interested to hear the comments from the member opposite. Now I'm going to have to do a little research and see if all these people have maybe Liberal connections. I sure wasn't aware of the fact that they all had Conservative connections. But anyway, thank you for raising our awareness of all those issues.

You know what? I think some of the comments that are being made in this House are a reflection of the fact that we're dealing with a bill that we've had seven hours to debate. Because the bill really doesn't amount to much more than housekeeping and perhaps a few minor changes, it truly doesn't warrant the time that has been set aside for it. I think personally that there are many people in this province who are experiencing a tremendous amount of hardship, who continue to look for jobs and are not able to find them, who continue to need training programs, and certainly support in literacy and numeracy, and who really would like to provide for themselves and their families, but they just aren't able to get the support or get entry into the program.

I think our time probably could be better spent focusing on issues that really matter to people in the province of Ontario and the quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Oxford has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Welland, Willowdale, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Kitchener-Waterloo for their kind comments.

To the member from Willowdale, I don't remember in my presentation—if that was a comment to it—that I was talking about this report and all the money that went to consultants. If I was, it wasn't me who was saying that. It was the Auditor General who said there was a problem with all this money going to consultants. I would just

point out to him that it's very important as to how that got before us.

The other thing that was mentioned earlier by a member from the opposite side was that they couldn't understand why we were all here debating this bill this afternoon. I want to point out for anyone watching, and I'm sure everyone in this House knows, that it's not the opposition that gets to choose what we're going to debate Thursday afternoon. Thursday afternoon is a sitting day for the government, and it's the government that came forward with this bill. I would think that they likely would have more important things to debate. When the member opposite made the comment that we shouldn't be debating it, he was talking about going home so he wouldn't have to be here at all. I think that's a different story than saying that there are more important things to do. I agree. I would rather have been debating a better bill here.

The other thing I just wanted to very quickly touch on was that my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned the eco tax and the fact that even though they flip-flopped on it rather quickly, there was a time in there when all the businesses were collecting tax on this thing, and now the Premier says, "We're not going to do that program. We're not going to collect it." If we had good government, we'd have somebody looking at where that money is and where it's going to go from here on in because that belongs to the people who should never have been charged it. I think somebody should be dealing with that. I would think that, instead of passing fluff bills like this, they would have somebody from good government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It appears I have less than five minutes because, of course, at 6 o'clock the Legislature will conclude its deliberations for the week, so I really only have five minutes to make a few points about good government. Of course, that's the subject of this particular bill, according to the government side, Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

This bill has been debated quite extensively now, and we've heard some interesting comments from the government—of course, the usual line of what a wonderful job they're doing. On our side of the House, we've pointed out some objections, but of course, with the trouble the government's been in in the last few weeks—the last few months actually, perhaps going back to May as the starting point—for the government to come into the House with a bill entitled the Good Government Act is absolutely ridiculous. It's absurd. It's humorous, if it wasn't so sad.

The fact is, this government has not been providing good government for the people of Ontario. I hear it. I know that the government members opposite must hear it in their communities. Again, going back to May, people started to come up to me in significant numbers, in droves, saying to me, "When is the next election? We have to get rid of the Premier and his government." That

is what I'm hearing consistently in my community, and have been for many months now.

When you look back at what perhaps was the triggering factor—I don't know what it was. Perhaps it was the fact that the HST was going to be clicking in or perhaps it's the fact that a significant number of people are starting to tune in as to what's going on here, having ignored it for some time. Perhaps people recognize the concerns that exist in the economy and they're looking to government for answers. They're looking for government to do something in terms of the economy and come forward with meaningful solutions to the economic anxiety that they face.

But of course, instead, the government's program consists of a new tax, the HST, and the eco fees that they first introduced by stealth on Canada Day but then withdrew, or say they withdrew. You can go through a whole litany and list of things, especially in the last few weeks, where the government has lost its moorings, where the government is panicking, where the government seems to have no coherent plan whatsoever, except to make a policy statement and then withdraw it 24 hours later or 48 hours later because they really don't know what they should do.

I would submit that our member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, when he suggested there needs to be an election now, is right. The people in my riding want to see an election now, because they want to see leadership; they want to see good government in this province. They want to see a government that's responding to their concerns, their needs, providing hope and responding to their aspirations and the needs of their community.

This government is not capable of doing it. They're out of gas; they're out of time. And they are completely out of touch with what's happening in their communities if they don't hear what I'm hearing in my constituency, and I suspect many of them are.

You can see it in the House during question period. Quite often, the only people who are clapping for the Premier are the cabinet ministers. The backbenchers are sitting around—there are usually about 30 of them missing, but the ones who are here are not clapping for the Premier. They're not responding to his cues. There is obviously a great deal of despondency over there and concern about the future of their political prospects. There's no question that that's happening. I've seen it happen before, and it's happening over there on that side.

I would suggest to you and submit to you, Mr. Speaker, the election isn't until October. The people of Ontario expect us to be working together towards the resolution of these concerns. Certainly, that's what I tried to do this afternoon with my private member's resolution when I brought forward, in a non-partisan way, the needs of my community, and did everything in a non-partisan way as best I could.

Unfortunately, I couldn't—I still can't believe the response of the government was to just shoot it down because it was coming from the opposite side of the House: not looking at the merits of the argument, not

looking at the needs of my community, but ignoring that entirely. Just shoot it down, because that's what the notes say. I would have expected better this afternoon, and I'm exceedingly disappointed.

On that note, I note that it is 6 o'clock and would suggest that I'll see you next week, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Monday 25 October 2010****Lundi 25 octobre 2010****Speaker**
Honourable Steve Peters**Président**
L'honorable Steve Peters**Clerk**
Deborah Deller**Greffière**
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 octobre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to introduce a number of office staff and caucus staff—Kris Barnier, Kelly Harris, Daniel Gordon, David Donovan, Sarah McMaster and Anthony Rizzetto—who are joining us today in the public galleries. They will be here all day. They will not be out campaigning for George Smitherman in the mayoral office on the taxpayers' dime. They will be working here.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm very pleased to introduce a member of the PC caucus staff, Mr. Dave Prisco, who's here working hard on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario. He's not out campaigning for George Smitherman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members that this is introduction of guests, and there should not be any commentary with it.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Tara Barry, a hard-working member of our office working for the PC caucus, who's here working for the taxpayers today and not out campaigning for the next mayor—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I again remind the honourable members that we are introducing our guests to the Legislature. It's not intended to be used for other purposes.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to introduce two people in the west members' gallery: my wife, Carole Shurman, and for the first time in this Legislature since I was elected, my son Brian Shurman, recently returned to Toronto from Dubai.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm sure Brian thanks you.

I would also like to introduce Noah Ng, Ari Laskin, Marcia Morrison and Jen Andrew, all hard-working members of the PC caucus staff who are here working for taxpayers today, not out campaigning for George Smitherman.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to introduce Don Jackson and Colleen Chutko. Both are hard-working members of our PC caucus staff. They are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introduction of guests?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce Nick Koolsbergen, Amanda Meek and Dianne Tominac, who are definitely hard-working members of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Introductions?

Mr. Frank Klees: Someone who is well familiar to members of the Legislature, hard-working, dedicated executive assistant Dr. Alex Roman, is with us today.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to introduce a very hard-working member of my staff, Dan Powers.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to introduce Marcia Morrison in the west visitors' gallery, a hard-working member of the PC staff, and also Daniel Gordon, who's also an important part of our staff.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'm pleased to introduce Lesley Daw, a hard-working member of the PC caucus staff, who, I might add, has been out at nights canvassing for municipal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to introduce my legislative assistant, Stephen Yantzi, who does an excellent job on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills. He's in the gallery too, not working on the election campaign today.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wish to introduce Robert Willett from Hamilton. He works for me, not Smitherman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Welland and page Ffion Hughes, we'd like to welcome her mother, Joyce Little; her father, Alun Hughes; and her sister Nia Hughes to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member for Guelph and page Calder Morton-Ferguson, we'd like to welcome his mother, Mavis Morton; his brother Ader Morton-Ferguson; his grandfather Ross Morton and his grandmother Geraldine Morton to the members' gallery today.

The five minutes for introductions having been expired, it is now time for oral questions.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Minister of Health: Minister, no doubt, in light of the scathing auditor's report on eHealth 2.0 last week, you've done

calculations in your office this week. Could you perhaps inform the House: How much did Ontario families shell out for all of the consultants hired by your Ministry of Health, your local integration networks and Ontario hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me begin by thanking the auditor for the job that he did. As the member opposite might remember, when they were in government the Auditor General could not go into hospitals. The Auditor General did not have the authority to go into hospitals. It was our government that gave the Auditor General the responsibility of looking at hospitals. The Auditor General has the authority, and because we asked him specifically to go in and report back on the use of consultants in our hospitals, in our LHINs, in our ministries, we now have the recommendations from the Auditor General that we are acting on. We have introduced legislation that will put an end to the practices that he has revealed.

I think what's important to note is that under their government, none of this would have been open to public scrutiny.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's sad but not surprising that the minister has no information to share with the House today. You'd think the minister, upon receiving this latest scathing report about Liberals' spending abuses, would have had the staff burning the midnight oil to find out exactly how much was wasted by their feeding frenzy with Liberal-friendly consultants. The auditor says that over a quarter of a billion dollars that could have gone to front-line health care went to consultants through your own ministry. Public accounts—a simple study shows some \$33 million to consultants and untold millions from hospitals.

Minister, west Niagara families have raised almost \$14 million towards a new hospital that you promised back in 2005, but you still haven't come forward with a single dollar of spending. How much longer do West Niagara families have to wait for you to get your priorities straight?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to spending in health that does not go to the very kinds of services that we're all committed to, which is front-line care, I cannot take lessons from the party opposite. I think it's instructional, if nothing else, to note that under their watch, they had over 600 consultants at work. We have half that number today, so they were spending twice as much as we are on consultants. They can be sanctimonious. They can be on their high horse, criticizing our government, but it was under their watch where they were spending twice as much as we spend today on consultants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's disappointing that the minister refers to legitimate concerns of Ontario families who are paying more and getting less under the McGuinty government as "their high horse." We're going to stand on the side of Ontario families, who have seen their health care service on the front line cut while you gave out

hundreds of millions of dollars to Liberal-friendly consultants.

Just look at Fort Erie and Port Colborne in the Niagara Peninsula. George Smitherman, the then Minister of Health, ordered \$11.4 million to be cut from front-line health care services, and since then, they've closed down the ERs in both of those communities. It would cost approximately \$1 million to upgrade those facilities back to ERs, but the Ministry of Health spent 225 times that on consultants alone from what the Auditor General discovered.

Minister, why is it Dalton McGuinty's priority to line the pockets of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member of the use of titles.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Why is the Premier prioritizing his Liberal-friendly consultants instead of front-line health care for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the member opposite is continuing his drive-by smear campaign of our health care workers this afternoon. I understand he is going into his riding, but he is not actually going to be talking to any patients. He's not going to be talking to any health care workers. He's not going to be talking to any administration. He's going to continue his practice of driving in, setting up a podium and a microphone and slamming the people who are delivering excellent care in his own community.

I do not think that that is behaviour that is becoming in a man who aspires to be Premier of this province. I think he needs to take the time to go in and actually talk to the front-line health workers, because what he will find is that wait times have come down, that patients are getting better care, that there are more doctors working, there are more nurses—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's sad that the Minister of Health is giving these types of nonsense answers on a very serious issue.

Families are waiting longer to get front-line patient care. They're seeing their emergency rooms closed down in Fort Erie and Port Colborne, and here in the city of Toronto, Toronto families are dealing with the McGuinty government cuts to front-line health care at Toronto East General Hospital. Toronto East General, under the McGuinty government, is no longer providing outpatient rehabilitation care. The five nights that a consultant out of the McGuinty government spent in Singapore would have paid for 100 hours of rehab with a physiotherapist for hard-working Toronto families.

Minister, why did you let expensive insiders cheat honest, hard-working families who need front-line patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, we are the government that gave the Auditor General the authority to go into hospitals. We are the government that asked him specifically to look at the use of consultants in our hospitals.

We are acting on all of the recommendations because we think that will result in better health care for the people of this province, in stark contrast to the party opposite that has committed—they're going to tell you, "Oh, no, no, no." They are committed to cutting health care spending by \$3 billion. So he can talk about being very sad about cuts that he has identified, but a \$3-billion cut to health care will have a devastating impact in our health care system.

Ontarians do not want to go back to the days of cuts and chaos—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment.

I just would remind honourable members that some of the interjections and some of the comments that are being made on both sides of the House are certainly bordering on being unparliamentary. Whether you say it in the form of a question, say in an answer or say it under your breath, some of those words are not parliamentary.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's disappointing, in light of the scathing eHealth 2.0 report, Minister, that you use rhetoric that doesn't even have a passing acquaintance with the truth, to be polite.

Let's get back to the facts here. On the very same day that the auditor released the eHealth 2.0 report, the Peterborough—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I remind the Minister of Finance that it has been understood in this chamber that if you have a point of order, you can raise it following the question period.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The facts on the ground, Minister, indicate that on the very same day that the auditor released the eHealth 2.0 report, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre cut 12 full-time and two part-time registered nurses.

Let me put this in perspective: For the \$1.6 million that the auditor found that a mere handful of hospitals used to lobby you and to lobby Premier McGuinty, Peterborough could not only have kept the nurses, they could have hired 16 more. Why do you prioritize the Courtyard Group and Liberal-friendly consultants while patient care is being cut by Premier McGuinty?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's kind of remarkable, frankly, that we're getting this line of questioning from a party that, when they were in government, made a practice of cutting health care services. They left our health care system in terrible shape.

The practices that the Auditor General revealed, and revealed because we asked him to go in and tell us what to do, have been going on for a long time. They were going on when this party was in power, when this party was in power, and when our party was in power. They were going on under governments of all stripes, but we are the government that is going to put an end to these practices. We have introduced legislation that puts an end to practices that have gone on far too long. We have continued to improve accountability and transparency, and only because we have taken those steps do we have this information—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the problem, with all due respect to the Minister of Health: It keeps happening over and over and over again. You had the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle; now you have eHealth 2.0. You've had three consecutive scandals with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Things have become so bad under Premier McGuinty that even his scandals are starting to have sequels, and the only way to bring change is to change the government in the province of Ontario.

So let me give the minister one more example: In the Premier's own riding, we've seen the McGuinty government cut 190 registered nurses who provide front-line health care at the Ottawa Hospital. If you took only one third of what the LHINs have spent on sweetheart deals with consultants, Ottawa families would have every one of those nurses back. Why, Minister, does the Premier prioritize Liberal-friendly consultants instead of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let's be really clear: Under our watch, we have rebuilt the health care system. Let's just do a little compare and contrast here. Under their watch, 6,200 nurses fired; under our watch, 10,000 more nurses working today than when we took over from that government. Under their watch, 28 hospitals closed; under our watch, we've opened 18 hospitals. Under their watch, they actually changed the freedom-of-information law to exclude Hydro One. We have reversed that decision. We have opened up FOI to Hydro One. We went further and we expanded FOI to cover OPG, universities, Cancer Care Ontario, local public utilities and, if our legislation passes, hospitals will be open to freedom of information.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. This government promised change after the auditor exposed the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. The Premier said at the time, "I take responsibility for this." Last week, the Auditor General's report showed that not much has changed at all since eHealth. Just this past weekend, the Ottawa Citizen reported that the Champlain LHIN doled out \$600,000 to nine well-connected consultants.

When can Ontario finally expect the change that has been promised by our Premier?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is exactly because we now know that practice is going on that we have introduced legislation to address that very issue. The Auditor General did us all a very big favour by going in and looking carefully at where these precious health care dollars were being spent. He looked at 16 hospitals. What he determined was that we have a problem not just in those 16 hospitals; we have a problem across the system. That's why we are taking the action we are taking. It is strong action. It is bold action. It is another step in improving transparency and accountability, and it will put an end to practices that have been under way for far too long under parties of all stripes. We are making the changes that people expect of us. We're making the changes that taxpayers expect of us, because when people pay their taxes, they want—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For seven long years, this government allowed our public health dollars to be diverted to well-connected consultants and lobbyists. For every million dollars squandered on insider lobbyists, 25 more long-term-care beds could have been provided for patients and seniors in places like Thunder Bay or Windsor.

How could this government not have known that well-connected consultants and lobbyists were lining their pockets with money that should have gone into front-line care for Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we're all getting a bit tired of the suggestion that this is something that we invented on this side of the House. This is a practice that has been going on for decades under all governments of all stripes.

The NDP, when they were in power, did nothing to stop the hiring of lobbyists with public dollars. The 1991 Auditor General's report found that in the NDP's first full year in office, they spent more than \$240 million in consulting fees for everything from designing highways to preparing news releases. In 1994, the NDP Minister of Transportation hired a lobbyist firm with over \$13,000 in taxpayer dollars to lobby the federal government for taxpayer—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead of blowing \$2.6 million on a sole-sourced consultant deal, families in Toronto or Ottawa could have had 90,000 more hours of home care provided to them and their loved ones. Over 30 nurses could have been hired to help their kids when they were sick.

Why won't the McGuinty government own up to this outrageous misuse of public funds, public health care dollars?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have done exactly that. We asked the Auditor General to go in and shine a light

in a corner that had been dark for far too long. We knew that when we gave him the power to look at hospitals, he would find things that we did not find acceptable. That's exactly what he did. He did not disappoint us.

The difference between our government and the others is that we took action. We have put an end to the practices, if this legislation passes, and I'm going to ask the leader of the third party this: Will her party support this legislation that expands freedom of information to hospitals, or does she, like her colleague, consider this worthless and not worthy of support?

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The Premier and his cabinet ministers have repeatedly said that publicly funded organizations should not hire lobbyists. "Pick up the phone," they tell hospital, college and university presidents. If that's the case, why has this government proposed legislation that will still allow public sector lobbyists to be hired after all?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think if the member opposite perhaps hasn't already had a briefing on the legislation, that might be helpful to explain exactly where we set the threshold. We want this legislation to be enforceable. We are including the vast majority of public health care dollars. Hospitals will be included. Broader public sector organizations are included. There are some organizations that receive under \$10 million that are not included in the legislation but, trust me, they understand the spirit of the legislation.

The other important piece is that we have instructed all of our staff and ministry staff to embrace the new way of doing business, and that is not working with lobbyists. So, if organizations wish to hire lobbyists, I suppose they can do it, but nobody will be answering the phone at the other end.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the minister needs to have a bit of a briefing on the legislation. This government's so-called lobbyist crackdown lets hospitals, colleges and universities—all of those organizations—hire lobbyists as long as the money comes from other sources, like tuition fees and perhaps donations.

If lobbyists aren't needed at all, the question is, why does this government's bill let public money be diverted to insider lobbyists instead of things like student aid, for example, and front-line care?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to be really clear about this, and this is important: Hospitals get about 85% of their money from us. They cannot use that money to hire lobbyists anymore. We do not have jurisdiction over the money they get from their foundations, for example, so we can't pass a law prohibiting that.

What I can tell you is the spirit of the legislation is very clear. I have spoken to hospital board chairs and

hospital CEOs and I have made it very clear: Don't start looking for loopholes here because the principle remains the same. Lobbying takes two. They can lobby us but we won't be responding because we think that money can be spent better elsewhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's bill has so many loopholes in it you could drive a Mack truck through it. That's the point.

When students and their parents pay tuition fees and families make donations to their local hospitals, they don't expect the money to go to insider lobbyists—that's the bottom line. If the Premier and his cabinet ministers are opposed to lobbyists in public sector institutions on principle, why doesn't their bill simply ban the practice entirely instead of letting insider lobbyists in through the back door?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The auditor, because we gave him the authority and because we asked him to specifically go in and look at this issue, reported to us on practices that were going on that were unacceptable—unacceptable to us as a government, unacceptable to the members opposite and unacceptable to taxpayers. That is why we are making the changes we are making. We are opening up hospitals to freedom of information. This is a step that will have significant impacts on the way hospitals do business. We are requiring that expenses be posted publicly. We are asking that hospitals report on the use of consultants.

We do have work to do, and we are doing that work. I'm proud that we were able to respond as quickly as we did and as—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Health as well. In the seven years since the Vaughan Health Campus of Care was created for the purpose of bringing a hospital to Vaughan, families in the region have raised over \$6 million. In addition to fundraising, Minister, Vaughan families have been paying for a new hospital with a special assessment on their property taxes. Your ministry approved and funded master planning and a plan for Vaughan hospital to work in tandem with York Central Hospital.

Why have the McGuinty Liberals spent the money that hard-working Vaughan families pay for a hospital on eHealth and all the consulting and expense boondoggles of eHealth 2.0?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That does not bear a passing resemblance to truth. This is a government that has very deliberately improved our health care system. We have more than 10,000 more nurses working in the system. We have close to 3,000 more doctors working in the system.

When this party left office, people were waiting an unconscionable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The members will please come to order, and the Minister of Finance will please come to order as well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A little respect for the Chair.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's from all sides.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have improved the quality of care in this province and we are continuing to improve the quality of care. When we took office, people simply could not find a family doctor. Now we have a much, much better—almost a million more people attached to primary care. Every step we have taken, they have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Your channel changer isn't working. It's not just the families of Thornhill and Vaughan who have been cheated of front-line health care by your decision to spend on greedy consultants instead. McGuinty Liberal health care cuts forced Cornwall Community Hospital to reduce surgeries by 10% and close eight beds. Northumberland Hills Hospital has had to close a diabetes clinic and cancel outpatient rehabilitation care.

While you couldn't find money for front-line health care, you handed one consultant \$422,000 in salary and fees, plus more for his junket to Chicago and long-distance bills. You even paid \$600,000 to a consultant who advised on how to deal with budget shortfalls. Why did you spend millions of dollars on consultants who cheated Cornwall and Northumberland families out of front-line care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Any way you measure it, front-line care in this province is substantially better than the way we found it. We've got 19 more MRI machines. We've got double the number of MRI hours. We've been able to make a dramatic difference for people who are waiting for hip replacement surgery, waiting for cancer surgery, waiting for cataract surgery.

This party left our health care system in shambles. We've spent the last seven years cleaning it up, and you know what? They want to do it all over again, because they want to cut health care spending by \$3 billion. You cannot cut \$3 billion out of health care and improve quality of care at the same time.

The people of this province deserve to hear from these folks, because they say they can cut \$3 billion and not cut service. I don't believe them and I don't think there's anybody in this province that does. They owe it to the people of this province to say what—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The refurbishment of Bruce Power has been delayed again. This is not surprising, though, because every

nuclear project in Ontario's history has been delayed and over budget.

Given that the cost of building and refurbishing nuclear plants has doubled and the cost of renewable energy is falling, why has this government ruled out increasing renewable power and reducing nuclear in advance of its electricity plan consultations?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's so much there for me to dive into; I'm trying to figure out where I want to start. Let me start with this: Let me start by answering the question. I think it's something that Ontarians would be very, very pleased to hear.

Yes, indeed, we're very much aware that the Bruce refurbishment has been delayed. That's not news to anybody. We knew that was taking place. That's something that's been known for some time.

I think the key here is that our contract with Bruce has ensured that taxpayers, ratepayers, will not be left on the hook for any overruns with regard to that contract. That speaks to the responsible way that this government is doing energy, and it stands in stark contrast to where we were seven years ago and where we were, prior to that, under the NDP.

We're very proud of the fact that we're going to continue to invest in nuclear, we're going to continue to invest in renewables and we're going to have a very responsible and balanced mix—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister says that Ontario ratepayers won't pay for cost overruns on the Bruce refurbishment, but that's only because the government signed a sweetheart deal that overpays Bruce Power for electricity it doesn't even produce and because federal taxpayers are subsidizing the refurbishment through the AECL. Now the McGuinty government plans to refurbish the Darlington nuclear plant at a cost of \$10 billion, before the cost overruns even occur.

Why won't this minister hold a public inquiry into the cost of refurbishing Darlington before committing Ontarians to another nuclear boondoggle?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know somehow the NDP thinks there's an energy fairy out there that can somehow provide us with half of the power that we're going to need going forward into the future in this province. It's very clear that the NDP policy is simply irresponsible. We need that nuclear baseload in our power system. We know that. The opposition knows that. I'm surprised that the NDP has not learned that yet. It's very, very important.

We will be moving forward in the future with a refurbishment of Darlington because we need to. And will it cost? We know that it will. We know that it's an important investment. But if we were to listen to them, we would place our entire energy system in dire need, at risk and in distress.

I'm looking forward to moving forward with our long-term plan. It should be before this Legislature very, very

soon. In that plan, Ontarians will see what real planning is all about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1110

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I too have a question for the Minister of Energy.

Ontario's energy system has changed dramatically over the past seven years. From bringing over 8,000 new megawatts of generation online, to upgrading our outdated transmission and distribution infrastructure, to conservation programs that have saved over 1,700 megawatts so far, it has come a long, long way. It may be fair to say that the energy picture in Ontario has finally turned the corner from the unreliable disgrace it became during the 1990s.

Monumental transformations like this take a bold vision and prudent planning. The minister often speaks of a long-term energy plan. Can the minister provide details on the progress of that plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. Speaking of our long-term energy plan, I very much appreciate the question from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and I share his enthusiasm for the monumental improvements that are taking place in Ontario's energy system.

I can tell the member that the updated long-term energy plan is coming together nicely and I'm pleased to be able to say that we'll be releasing it very soon to Ontarians. That's going to be very important to our future together and I'm looking forward to releasing that plan very soon.

It's important to remember that energy planning of any kind is relatively new to this province. It really began seven years ago when this government took office. I can recall, and I'm sure the member does as well, the sort of knee-jerk and fly-by-night decisions that were being made by the government of the day just seven or eight years ago. After their deregulation scheme imploded and they came up with a plan to freeze electricity rates, it ended up costing us \$900 million that we see on our energy bill every day—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Thank you, Minister. I know that all members of this House look forward to seeing that tangible product and to seeing this plan tangibly continue to move Ontario forward.

It's clear that the long-term energy plan is going to touch on a great many points. One, though, that I think is particularly important is the issue of value for money in the investments. Given what we inherited seven years ago, the critical need for the investments is obvious. Will the long-term energy plan touch on the need for value for money spent in the energy system?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. Absolutely, value for money is one of the most

important motivations behind each and every decision we make. At a time of rising costs, we've directed our energy agencies to freeze management salaries and lower their expectations on potential rate increases, and we've opened them up to freedom of information. That stands, frankly, in stark contrast to the Tories, who kept Hydro One and OPG from being subject to freedom of information.

We know why that was happening: because there was a \$10-million expenditure going on within Hydro One to help Tory operatives out after they finished their work here at Queen's Park. I can give examples of that, like Mike Harris, for instance, who got a \$20,000 consulting contract from Hydro One, after leaving the Premier's office, to do nothing—not a single document has ever been shown of any advice that he gave—or Mike Harris's campaign chair, Tom Long, who got \$2.3 million to improve insight and leadership techniques—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last Thursday, the Toronto Star quoted the minister as having said that MPPs should lobby for their hospitals. In fact, she said, "I urge the hospitals to make use of the best lobbyists they have and that's their MPPs."

That same day, in a spectacular display of legislative incompetence, Liberal MPPs were whipped to vote against my resolution on our local hospitals. In effect, Liberals were whipped to vote against the health care needs of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills.

Why did she say MPPs should lobby when she evidently didn't mean it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I find that to be, frankly, a very disappointing question. The member from Wellington has on several occasions spoken to me in the Legislature and outside about how we can improve health care in his community. It is a relationship that I have thought was a good and strong one and one that I do want to continue to build on.

I do want to say to all MPPs in the Legislature that you are the best lobbyists that organizations in your riding could have. I commit to continue to work with MPPs from all parties in this House, as I have done in the past.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's not just my riding. I'm told that in Hamilton, the local community care access centre is being forced to ration baths for seniors to just one per week in an effort to manage its \$5-million deficit.

The Auditor General's report last week cited a \$215 bar tab expensed by one consultant. That would have paid for five hours of respite care for a Hamilton family, or it would pay for four baths for a senior. Last year, Premier McGuinty said he had ended these kinds of expense abuses, but a year later nothing has changed.

How can the government defend paying an expensive bar tab over providing respite care for Hamilton families?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to give the member 10 seconds to rephrase that. I'm trying to tie the question into the supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: To rephrase it, how can the government rationalize spending money like this, \$215, on an expense bill expensing the consultant's bar tab and leaving important health care priorities left waiting?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to move to the next question because there is no relation.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Acting Premier. People in Ontario continue to struggle to pay the rent and provide food for their families. Meanwhile, this government's poverty reduction strategy has stalled: no action on the promised welfare review, no action on the affordable housing strategy, no action on a replacement for the special diet allowance.

The question: In all its pre-election posturing and fear-mongering, has poverty reduction fallen off the government's radar?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so pleased to have a chance to stand in this House and perhaps refresh the mind of the member opposite as to what our government has done in this province to improve the lives of families in Ontario.

In the last six months, we've introduced full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds, beginning in September of this year. It is an investment of \$200 million and \$300 million next year that will support early learning programs. Experts around the province indicate that if you want to lift families out of the circumstances in which they live, if you want to help moms go back to school or gain employment, this program does that.

We've raised the minimum wage in the last six months. We have increased the shelter allowance by 1%. We have committed to investing \$6 million over two years to expand protection for some of the province's most vulnerable workers. That's in addition to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This minister talks—I don't know what she says when she talks over there because none of it makes any sense to the poor. It's been almost two years since the government announced its poverty reduction strategy. People living in poverty are waiting for answers. Those who rely on the special diet allowance—real people with real needs—are now crushed by anxiety over losing their badly needed support.

The Premier used to say that poverty is unacceptable in this wealthy province. Poverty reduction has fallen off this government's radar in this pre-election year.

When will Ontarians know how our poorest and most vulnerable citizens will pay the rent and put healthy food on their tables?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to compare our record to the record opposite any day. Our side of the

House has taken concrete action to improve the lives of families and children in this province.

Let's reflect on the actions that have been taken by the other side. That side of the House voted against our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will please come to order.

Minister?

1120

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: That side of the House voted against our creation of 22,000 new affordable child care spaces. That side of the House voted against stabilizing the rent bank and providing over 30,000 rent supplements. They voted against minimum wage increases. They voted against taking 90,000 low-income Ontarians off the tax rolls. They continue to act in a blind, partisan way, attacking the strategy simply because it isn't theirs.

We stand with Ontario families. We're trying to help those families lift themselves up and give a better life to them and their kids. We're very proud of the steps that we take every single day, in contrast to the inaction and partisanship on the other side of the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order.

New question.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River is home to many new immigrants. Immigrants in my riding come to Ontario to create a better life for themselves and their families. Once immigrants arrive in Ontario, they depend on settlement service support to integrate socially and economically.

Recently, the CBC reported that the federal Conservatives are cutting funding to immigrant settlement service agencies. This concerns me and it concerns agencies such as Settlement Assistance and Family Support Services because it means they will have fewer resources to help newcomers succeed.

Can the minister tell newcomers to Ontario what the government is doing to stop the Conservative funding cuts?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am very concerned that the federal Conservative government has decided to cut \$53 million next year and a further \$59 million in subsequent years from immigrant settlement service agencies. New immigrants in Ontario rely on settlement services to access language training, job search, housing and other vital services. The Conservative cuts will hurt the ability of settlement agencies to deliver these important services to newcomers.

As Ontario emerges from this economic downturn, our future economic prosperity depends on putting the skills of our newcomers to work. That's because within this decade, immigrants will make up 100% of Ontario's

labour force growth, and that's why all governments must provide our newcomers with the best resources to succeed.

I urge the federal Conservatives to immediately reverse their decision and reinstate the funding for Ontario's newcomers.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. No, I was listening carefully to the question, and it was certainly a question directed at the minister, with his ministerial responsibilities.

Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Newcomers in my riding will be pleased to hear that the minister is calling on the federal Conservatives to reverse their funding cuts.

Immigrants in Scarborough have told me first-hand about the meaningful impact that settlement agencies make in their lives. In the past, I've met with settlement agencies in Scarborough to learn about the important front-line work they do every day. Now that the federal Conservatives have cut settlement service funding, settlement agencies will need to make up the federal shortfall. Some have suggested that the province may be able to help with this. Will the government make up the funding shortfall now that the federal Conservatives have decided to shortchange Ontario newcomers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Unlike the federal Conservatives, the McGuinty government will not cut vital funding that our newcomers depend on. We will continue to build on the \$900 million we have already invested in our newcomers since 2003.

With our immigrants disproportionately affected by the economic downturn, Ottawa's cuts have come at the worst possible time. Already, the federal Conservatives have shortchanged Ontario's newcomers by failing to spend \$207 million under the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement.

While we will continue to invest in our newcomers, we cannot commit more funding every time the federal Conservatives withhold crucial funding and download their funding responsibilities to us. It's not fair to Ontario and, more importantly, it's not fair to Ontario's newcomers.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Hospice North Hastings program coordinator Heather Brough says that she spends 80% of her time on LHIN paperwork and meetings, taking her away from helping people. She's fed up with the LHINs and is willing to forgo the \$52,000 a year the hospice gets from them.

Minister, why did you say the LHINs would make things easier for community care organizations when they don't? Why did you do that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a case that I will look into. I don't quite understand that particular argument, but I will undertake to do that.

What I can tell you, though, is that it is the LHINs' responsibility to improve the integration of care, to build the continuum of care in our health care system, and that includes hospices. We know we need to do a better job building the continuum of supports between hospitals and long-term care. There are people in hospitals who do not want to be there, who should not be there, who could be better served elsewhere. We also know there are people in long-term-care homes who could, with the right combination of supports, get the care they need at home, in the community.

The responsibility of the LHINs, and they have embraced this responsibility, is to build that continuum of care so that the health care system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: The LHINs get millions of taxpayers' dollars from your ministry for administration. Now the South East LHIN is forcing a community support agency like Hospice North Hastings to redirect time and money from patient care to jumping through bureaucratic hoops at the risk of losing the \$52,000 it gets. Community care agencies are willing to forgo money that's available to them rather than having to deal with the mess you created with the LHINs.

Why did you say the LHINs would make things easier when they don't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The LHINs are making it easier for people who are accessing the services that the LHINs are providing.

Let me talk about our aging at home strategy. Over a billion dollars is being invested to drive the creation of services that people who are aging need in their homes to keep them at home.

The LHINs are working very hard at bringing the health care silos together so it works for people. I met a gentleman not too long ago who, because of the LHINs, because of the services that he was able to access through the LHINs, has actually been able to move from long-term care into his own apartment. Keith Cooper is happier today because he's in his own home, he's independent and he's free to socialize with his friends and his community, only because of the work of the LHINs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Sky-high hydro bills are hurting families and seniors across the entire province. Irvine Cowell from Chatham writes this: "My bill has gone up \$100 a month and every time something goes up, that is that much less to live on."

When will this government give us one good reason why it can't give people like Mr. Cowell a break by taking the HST off hydro?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to respond to that question. Indeed, I'm still waiting to see the leader of the

third party's next newsletter, where I'm sure it's going to explain to her constituents who are writing to her on this, and who may not be aware, that the Ontario energy property tax credit is something we announced just a few weeks ago. That tax credit is going to benefit two thirds of Ontario seniors. Two point eight million Ontarians will receive tax relief to the tune of about \$1.3 billion in total. Seniors will receive up to over \$1,000 in tax relief. That's going to be of assistance to those residents.

We understand that we've been through tough times. We understand that Ontarians are coping with the past recession, that it has been tough, and we understand that energy rates are increasing. That's why we're providing assistance for those very individuals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Cowell isn't alone in feeling a pinched pocketbook. Dorothy Turk from Hastings writes this: "If something isn't done to lower my hydro bill soon, I'll not be able to afford to keep it on and still meet my other bills. I'm a widow on a disability pension, with no drug benefits, lung disease and expensive medication. How am I or any other person on a fixed income supposed to pay these high rates?"

Mr. Cowell and Ms. Turk need a break. They need a break now. Why won't this government give it to them and simply take the HST off of hydro bills?

1130

Hon. Brad Duguid: Day in and day out, the leader of the third party gets up in this place and opposes the important and critical investments that we're making in our energy system to ensure that we have reliable energy and to ensure that we can clean our air and impact the health of our residents by getting out of dirty coal. You cannot do that without making those critical investments. Let me quote Rick Smith, the director of Environmental Defence, who said, "More clean energy jobs in Ontario isn't just good news for workers. It's good news for everyone who wants cleaner air and lower emissions. Across this province, we're creating jobs and replacing old, polluting energy like coal with clean, modern energy like wind and solar."

When did the NDP lose their way? When did they part ways with the environmentalists of this province? Clearly, they've lost their way. They're looking for short-term political gain at the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The food and beverage processing industry is a major economic driver in our province, employing over 100,000 people and purchasing 70% of Ontario's farm production. Investments are needed to help our agri-food sector remain strong in today's economy and also to help them grow and expand. I know that in order to take advantage of the new markets and remain competitive, businesses throughout the province

often need to modernize their operations for increased productivity and upgrade equipment for increased efficiency.

Minister, please provide this House with an update on the role the province has played in working with processors across Ontario to help them find new markets and new opportunities for growth.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: The food and beverage processing industry is Ontario's second-largest manufacturing sector. We continue to support improved competitiveness in Ontario's food and beverage processing sector, and support economic development throughout the province. We have invested over \$290 million in the food processing sector. That has created or retained almost 6,200 jobs. We have established the food processing sector as a priority for investment under the rural economic development plan. We are committed to working with municipalities, regions and other ministries to identify potential opportunities for growth within the food and beverage sector in Ontario. It's about creating jobs in our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The Ontario economy has faced some significant challenges caused by the global recession, and our rural communities are certainly no exception. Moving forward, we're now looking for new opportunities. Our province is demonstrating its commitment to meeting these challenges head on.

I'm pleased to see that under OMAFRA's rural economic development—RED—program, food processors in rural communities are benefiting from provincial investments that will go a long way to improving production and expanding their processing capacities. This will make them more competitive in the marketplace. This also means more jobs and more opportunities for residents in our communities.

I ask the minister to provide more information on what actions our government has taken and will be taking in the future to work with our partners on initiatives in the food processing industry?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: There are more than 3,000 food processing businesses in the province, of which 700 are located in rural communities. Our government is continually working with the industry to help make very positive results that benefit both businesses and our province.

In 2009-10, the ministry committed approximately \$22 million to 33 food and beverage processing companies. This was through the rural economic development plan. Through the RED program, our government is helping companies to create and retain jobs, improve industry competitiveness, open new markets for our local farmers and our local product, and also reduce their environmental impact. Also, through our Open Ontario plan, we will continue to work with the Ontario processors, the producers and our communities to open up and increase the access to even more new markets throughout Ontario and throughout the world.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: David Brock is 28 years old. He has Duchenne muscular dystrophy. He's in a wheelchair and has serious respiratory, heart, bowel and urinary problems, and requires continuous, mechanical ventilatory support 24 hours a day. His parents, now both over the age of 60, can no longer provide the complex continuous care that he needs.

The CCAC, after concluding that there is not one facility in the Central LHIN that can accommodate David's care, directed the parents to the Central LHIN. The LHIN sent them back to the CCAC, leaving the family desperate.

Is this an acceptable response by an organization charged with the responsibility to assess local needs and to plan for local health services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a case, the member opposite knows, that I am not familiar with. He has not raised this case with me before. I will most certainly look into the particular case.

What I can tell you is that ours is a party that is committed to improving health care in this province. We have measured wait times that we never measured before. We're significantly expanding access to all types of care. We are committed to continue improving health care in this province.

I find it confusing, I guess is the right word, that a party that is advocating cutting health care is also the party that is advocating, on a case-by-case basis, for improving health care. It doesn't make sense that they would both want to cut and then want to spend.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I did make the minister aware of this on October 6; I copied her on my letter to the LHIN.

David's parents wrote to the Central LHIN. In those letters, it was pointed out that the only alternative for David is a hospital ICU at a cost of more than \$3,000 a day. The ministry's own chronic ventilation strategy task force graphically pointed out the enormous costs associated with that alternative in June 2006.

Given the mandate of the Central LHIN as a "system-planning organization" and given the glaring need for a facility to provide for long-term care with complex needs throughout York region, why, after so many years as York region's planning agency, has the Central LHIN not provided an appropriate care facility for people like David?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be the first one to say that we've still got a lot of work ahead of us when it comes to improving care for people right across this province. What I can tell you is that the LHINs are very focused on one of the issues that the member opposite raised, and that is getting people into the right care setting. Too many people are in hospitals who do not need to be in hospitals if they had the right supports outside of hospitals. It may well be that this gentleman falls into that category, that he could get the care outside of the

hospital, and that is what our LHINs are very focused on doing.

We're seeing success. The Hamilton Niagara LHIN has actually reduced the ALC rate from 23% to 13%. It is precisely by providing the right combination of care outside the hospital setting that they are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. At Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora, currently half of the medical surgical beds are occupied by 27 alternate level of care patients. Most of the 27 alternate level of care patients in medical surgical beds are seniors who are waiting for a long-term-care bed. Some of those seniors have been waiting now for five months—130 days.

My question is this: How much longer will they have to wait before a long-term-care bed becomes available to them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite raises an issue, as I said in the earlier question, that we are very focused on. People are staying in hospitals for far too long because the other supports are not available for them. That is the challenge that we have set ourselves to. The LHINs' number one priority right now is reducing the number of people who are in hospitals who ought not to be, do not want to be in hospital, and are not getting the best possible care in hospitals.

1140

The solution to that is multi-faceted. It includes better home care. It includes assess-and-restore beds. It includes a range of supports outside the hospital setting, including the building of more long-term-care beds.

What I can tell you is that all LHINs, including the North East LHIN, are very focused on reducing the ALC rates in their hospitals and they are seeing success. Have we got to where we need to be? Not yet, but we are going—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have to tell the minister that the North East LHIN won't do much for people who live in northwestern Ontario.

The continuing problem is this: For example, Kenora has some supportive housing, but there's not enough supportive housing so there's a long waiting list for supportive housing. The town of Rainy River has worked with the district social service board to re-equip some seniors' apartments, but the LHIN has not come forward with funding to turn them into supportive housing. In Fort Frances, where the waiting list is equally long, they're interested in supportive housing but they have put proposal after proposal after proposal to the North West LHIN without much of a response.

So, Minister, how long are people supposed to wait when they're not getting a positive response from the North West LHIN?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First, let me correct myself; I did say North East and I think the member opposite knows I did mean North West.

What I can tell you is that we now track ALC rates. The LHINs have all developed strategies to bring those ALC rates down. The important thing is that the solutions are different in every community. That's why it's so important that the LHINs at the local level develop strategies to improve the supports outside of hospitals to reduce those ALC rates.

People who work in health care understand that this is a complicated and challenging initiative. But we're up to it. There are strategies in each and every LHIN, and I would be more than happy to share the North West LHIN strategy with the member opposite. We are determined to do better when it comes to ALC rates in this province.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, we know that air and water quality are pressing national concerns. The Canadian Medical Association suggests that health care costs associated with just air pollution exceeded \$8 billion in 2008 alone. I know that you recently met with your provincial and federal counterparts at the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment conference in Newfoundland, and that air pollution was on the agenda. But actions speak louder than words.

Minister, what are the provinces, and especially Ontario, doing to improve air quality?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

Last week, I had the opportunity to engage in what was, I believe, an historic meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. It's not every day in our country when you have all 10 provinces, three territories and the federal government agree to do the same thing and all go in the same direction, and that's what it is about: the fact that we were able to move forward on the proposal to have comprehensive air management systems and standards right across this country, and Ontario was pleased to play its role.

It builds on the work that we're doing about eliminating dirty coal-fired generation. It ensures that we have a standard that allows our federal government now to negotiate with the American government.

As we know, here in Ontario, over half of our population has air pollution that actually comes from across the border from our cousins to the south. This will strengthen that. As well, we have our new three-year water strategy, building on the work we're doing right here in Ontario, being a leader in Confederation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Time for question period is ended.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation visiting from Nepal. The delegation is led by the Right Honourable Subas Nembang. Visiting us as well are Dr. Bhoj Raj Ghimire, Nepal's first and current ambassador to Canada, and John Sims, former Deputy Minister, Justice Canada, and other guests. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 pm this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to introduce the family of page Calder Morton-Ferguson, who's just delivering water to me. His family will be here in the gallery with us momentarily: his mom, Mavis Morton from Guelph; his brother Aden; and his grandparents Geraldine Morton and Ross Morton.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TIGER JEET SINGH

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today, I would like to acknowledge the long-standing humanitarian work of Tiger Jeet Singh and to congratulate him after the Tiger Jeet Singh Public School was officially opened on Friday.

Tiger Jeet Singh came to Canada from the Punjab area of India at the age of 17. Today, after almost 40 years as a world-famous wrestler, he attended the official opening of Tiger Jeet Singh Public School. Tiger was honoured for his long-standing commitment to philanthropy and humanitarian work, which is typically directed towards parents and their children. Tiger also serves as Milton's economic development ambassador to Southeast Asia and as its leader in Canada's Southeast Asian community. He has donated funds to Milton's hospital and to the Milton Historical Society, and he continues to support the humanitarian work in India.

Friday's official opening of the Tiger Jeet Singh Public School began as Roger Hadfield, father of Colonel Chris Hadfield, Milton's astronaut, flew overhead in his biplane. This was followed by a bhangra dance group and the official opening ceremony led by the students. Tiger was surrounded by his family and dignitaries from across Canada. Representatives of India, South Africa and Japan were also present to recognize Tiger's charity and success.

Most importantly, however, Tiger was welcomed by the children whom he endeared as part of his own family. To them, his message is his mantra: Stay in school, stay away from drugs and stay Tiger fit.

I would like to congratulate Tiger Jeet Singh for what he has done and continues to do for our community. We are all eternally grateful. Thank you, Tiger.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Dave Levac: Since 2003, the McGuinty government has made tremendous improvements in the health care system in Ontario. There's always room for more, though. We have created 200 family health teams, one of which is in Brant, that could provide care to more than 2.5 million people, and have begun implementation of 25 new nurse practitioner-led health clinics, the first of their kind ever. By 2013, 100 more first-year medical spaces will be available in Ontario. There will be twice as many doctors graduating from Ontario medical schools than in 2003.

We have also expanded MedsCheck programs to provide more service to Ontarians, especially our seniors who need that help. Most recently, we have introduced funding for programming in 13 more elderly persons centres in Ontario. This means that 273 centres across Ontario are receiving funding for maintenance, operations and programming to ensure the best experience for their residents.

It's important to do a little contrast here. The previous government, the Conservative government, closed 28 community hospitals, including St. Joe's in Brantford, while the McGuinty government has opened the doors to 18 new facilities. While we want to invest in patients and their needs, the opposition wants to cancel \$30 billion worth of care that could be on the front lines. This would be a loss and translate to 11,000 doctors or closures of more than 30 rural hospitals.

We can't have both ways. It's clear that our government has strengthened the public health units and we want—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to give you an example of what happens when bureaucracy closes its eyes and lives by its computer and a rule book. Earlier this year, the government passed the bill that would authorize the northern Ontario tax credit, the northern energy tax credit, which applied throughout northern Ontario, including the district of Nipissing, of which my riding has a portion.

When residents from the Whitney area of the township of South Algonquin applied for their energy tax credits, they received the reply from the Ministry of Revenue: "No can do. Can't do that. You're not eligible." To which they replied, "Why? We're in the district of Nipissing; that's northern Ontario." "No, you can't do that because your mailing code doesn't start with the letter P."

It was brought to our attention in our office. We spoke to people in the Ministry of Revenue. They said the same thing: "Can't do it. The mailing code doesn't start with the letter P." We got it moved up the food chain, as they say, and finally last week, they relented and said that people in the townships of South Algonquin, in the district of Nipissing, would now be eligible to receive the northern energy tax credit.

My message to the government is: When you're drafting legislation, take a look at the map of Ontario and check where the ridings are. Don't look at mailing codes. And I give the same advice to the bureaucrats: "Get out from behind your computers"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ONTARIO PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF TIBET

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, who were acknowledged in a special, private audience with His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, on the weekend. Members of this House will know about the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, and certainly, I would encourage all members to show up for our next meeting. There will be a monthly newsletter that goes out, Butila Carpacci, part of their initiative and ours to let the House know about the activities of His Holiness and also the activities of the Tibetan people in Toronto.

We were delighted to be shown the special privilege by the Nobel laureate and certainly, again, would recommend to everyone, if they can see YouTube videos of his speech at the Rogers Centre or at his private functions or teachings at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, that they certainly should tune in.

Finally, I'd like, on behalf of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, Tibetan people, anyone who values the principles of peace, non-violence and freedom, to thank His Holiness for his visit to Toronto, which truly was a blessing to our city and to all of us.

1310

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Over the next decade, Ontario will see a demographic shift in our population where we will have more people over 65 than under 15.

This government is committed to expanding services for this growing demographic. Ontario's elderly persons centres are the community hubs that maintain services in health and recreation as well as social services for Ontarians over 65.

On Friday, the McGuinty government announced an additional \$550,000 to 13 elderly persons centres, bringing the total number of centres to 273 serving over 150,000 seniors. This recent investment continues on the McGuinty government's proven track record of enhancing funding and opportunity for Ontario's seniors.

Ontario's groundbreaking aging at home strategy is part of our broad community-based supports, which include significant energy and property tax credits, income tax cuts and pension reforms that will allow more seniors to remain in the comfort of their own home with the dignity they deserve.

We've also opened 8,200 additional long-term-care beds and have bolstered long-term care with an additional \$1 billion since coming to office in 2003.

This government has put seniors first. I congratulate the government on their efforts and investments.

FUSION YOUTH ACTIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise today to recognize the fifth anniversary of Ingersoll's Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre.

Five years ago, it started as a two-room centre, with limited programs but a goal of giving youth a safe place to learn and grow. Today it is an example that many communities are looking to follow. They offer programs in music, art, technology, cooking, sports, business and leadership, and even broadcast a radio station from the centre. Today, more than half of the youth in Ingersoll have a membership at the Fusion centre. I want to commend the staff and volunteers who have made this such a success.

On October 14, I was pleased to attend the fifth anniversary celebration. It was an opportunity for the youth members to show off their talents. From artwork to recording video messages, they demonstrated the skills they have learned at the Fusion centre.

It was also an opportunity to celebrate the many people and organizations that have contributed to the success of the centre—from the Royal Bank, who announced a \$10,000 donation, to Cory and Tim Parrow, who raised \$4,500 through the Harvest Run, to Heart FM, who provided scholarships to help youth continue developing the skills they learn at the centre—and to celebrate the many community partners who were in attendance, including the Ingersoll OPP, board of education, town of Ingersoll, and people who provided counselling and training.

I want to congratulate the Ingersoll Fusion centre, and all the youth who are a part of it, on a very successful five years and offer them best wishes for many more.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thanks to the efforts of the McGuinty government, I am proud to announce that Guelph has recently attracted two solar energy manufacturers: Sustainable Energy Technologies and Canadian Solar Inc.

Sustainable Energy Technologies will create up to 300 direct and indirect jobs, and Canadian Solar will create up to 500 jobs in my community.

Sustainable Energy Technologies is partnering with Melitron, a high-tech Guelph sheet metal fabricator. Melitron will manufacture the boxes and assemble the inverters.

Attracting companies such as these is part of our Open Ontario plan to build an affordable, reliable and clean energy economy which will create well-paying jobs as well as protect the environment for our children and grandchildren.

The McGuinty government has been phasing out coal-fired generation and replacing it with clean alternative

energy sources like wind, water and sun. More than 8,000 new megawatts of clean energy have been introduced since 2003. But most importantly, we are entering into an exciting new era for Ontario's economy as we aim to capture a healthy share of the clean energy market.

In fact, both Sustainable Energy Technologies and Canadian Solar chose to open manufacturing plants in Guelph and provide up to 800 Ontarians with jobs because of our Green Energy Act.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Today I rise to speak on the issue of newcomers. The province of Ontario is certainly enriched by the contributions of new Canadians, and the delivery of services by local community organizations is crucial to the success of these newcomers.

In Hamilton, there is an organization called SISO, the Settlement and Integration Services Organization. Since 1993, SISO has provided valuable services to thousands of newcomers, services such as settlement, employment and language assistance.

I'm proud to say that the McGuinty government, through the Ontario Trillium fund as well as the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, has been a strong supporter of SISO. We provided an investment of half a million dollars and partnered with the federal government in terms of service provision.

I was deeply concerned to hear that the federal government has now chosen to withdraw funding for SISO. The importance of targeted services for newcomers like those provided by SISO cannot be understated. These services are critical to the success of new Canadians with respect to their transition into their new community, building new lives and, indeed, thriving. Through their work, newcomers and their communities both continue to be enriched.

It's my hope that the leaders of all political parties—especially the opposition—will approach whatever contacts they have in Ottawa to have this situation revisited.

MISSING CHILDREN

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise today to comment on every parent's nightmare: a missing child. I know my heart skips a beat to just consider such a thing.

In 2003, the Ontario government launched the Ontario Amber Alert program with its partners in broadcasting and law enforcement to help speed up the return of missing children. Amber Alerts are issued when a child has been abducted and local law enforcement, as well as the Ontario Provincial Police, believe that information being issued to the broader public will assist in the rapid recovery of the child. Since its launch in 2003, 19 activations of Ontario's Amber Alert system have occurred. Of these, 16 Ontario children have been safely returned to their families, at least in part due to the Amber Alert system.

As of 2009, new guidelines were established about issuing an alert. They are:

- (1) The law enforcement agency must believe a child under 18 has been abducted;
- (2) There must be a belief that the child is in danger;
- (3) There is a description of the child, vehicle or abductor that is believed will help locate the child.

This month, the Ontario government teamed up with Facebook to launch an online way of distributing Amber Alerts to the public. Ontario is the third province, joining New Brunswick and PEI, to partner with Facebook for the distribution of Amber Alerts. Through our partnerships like Facebook, we now have the ability to reach thousands of Ontarians.

I applaud our partners and the OPP for their leadership in protecting our youth and helping us to return all the children safely to their parents.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches—East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT (MINISTERS' ATTENDANCE AT QUESTION PERIOD), 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF (PRÉSENCE DES MINISTRES PENDANT LA PÉRIODE DES QUESTIONS)

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to increase legislative accountability for the Premier and Cabinet / *Projet de loi 123, Loi visant à augmenter la responsabilité législative du premier ministre et du Conseil des ministres.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This bill is similar to a bill put forward by the former member for Toronto Centre. The bill amends section 7 of the Executive Council Act to increase from \$500 to \$1,000 the daily fine for a minister of the crown who does not attend question period in the chamber on at least two thirds of the days on which question period is held.

The Liberal staff may have taken today off, but we're going to make sure that the Liberal members stay here and work.

1320

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I want to support Ms. Jones's Bill 83. I'll sign the petition and send it to the table with page Anika.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions to do with paved shoulders on provincial highways.

"Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I obviously support this.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is, of course, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas we are the parents, educators and friends of students in the Peel region public school system; and

"Whereas Peel students have historically received less funding per pupil per annum when compared to their

peers in other district school boards and, in particular, have inadequate special education resources; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario are entitled to equal opportunities in education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To recognize and provide for the \$18-million learning opportunities grant"—retroactively—"owed to Peel students;

"Implement measures to ensure ongoing funding is based on current census data and other key demographic indicators of student needs to ensure that Peel students receive a fair share of provincial education funding."

I affix my name to it and give it to page Kieran.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a number of my constituents.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I'm pleased to sign this petition as I support it. I'll pass it to my page, Haadiyah.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative

changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I affix my name to it and give it to page Harnameh.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas Norm Miller’s private member’s Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Norm Miller’s private member’s Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Jonathan.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition has to do with extending the Ombudsman of Ontario’s jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

“Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

“Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

“Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo’s private member’s bill, which calls for

the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman’s powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act.”

I couldn’t agree more, will affix my signature, and I’m going to give it to Harnameh to be delivered to the clerks.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise to present this petition on behalf of a lot of good folks around the province who have signed a petition dealing with defined benefit pension plans.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for ‘loss of sponsor’ of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

“Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

“Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the ‘loss of sponsor’ scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution.”

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas municipalities have always had control over planning matters in their communities; and

“Whereas community consultation and engagement is essential for successful green energy projects; and

“Whereas local residents should be actively involved in all discussions about wind turbine projects in their community;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government return planning power for renewable energy projects to municipalities and local residents by passing Bill 29, Planning Amendment Act (Renewable Energy Undertakings), 2010, Sylvia Jones, MPP for Dufferin–Caledon.”

Obviously, since it is my private member's bill, I support the petition, affix my name to it and give it to Anika.

1330

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of all the people who sent it to me. I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are the parents, educators and friends of students in the Peel region public school system; and

"Whereas Peel students have historically received less funding per pupil per annum when compared to their peers in other district school boards and, in particular, have inadequate special education resources; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario are entitled to equal opportunities in education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To recognize and provide for the \$18-million learning opportunities grant retroactively owed to Peel students;

"Implement measures to ensure ongoing funding is based on current census data and other key demographic

indicators of student needs to ensure that Peel students receive a fair share of provincial education funding."

I support the petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Haadiyah to take to the table.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Emmett.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I agree with this, sign my name and will pass it to page Anika.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I am delighted to be able to speak to this bill ever so briefly this afternoon. I will be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Before I hand it over, I'd like to welcome the students who are in the gallery today. It's always nice to have our visitors with us, and I hope you enjoy your stay at Queen's Park.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you to the government House leader for your eloquent words and sharing your time. I'd also like to welcome the students in the gallery on the other side. Welcome today, folks. Thanks for being here.

I'm pleased to stand in the House today for second reading of Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. This act is part of this government's comprehensive plan. It's a comprehensive plan to improve Ontario's retirement income system and to strengthen our employment pension plan through modernization and through innovation.

As you know, making it easier for Ontarians to save for their retirement has been an active file for the McGuinty government, particularly in this past week. Our government has taken significant steps to make it easier for Ontarians to save for retirement. On the provincial-federal-territorial front, this government continues to call for significant improvements to Canada's retirement income system. Thanks to urging by Premier McGuinty, the Council of the Federation endorsed the idea of a national summit on Canada's retirement income system. Federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers are now developing options for reform and will discuss these options at the upcoming federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting.

Specifically, we are calling for a modest, fully funded, phased-in expansion to the Canada pension plan; tax and regulatory changes to expand the range of institutions that can act as pension plan administrators; and to extend plan coverage to a broader range of people, including the self-employed. Such changes could also help lower the cost of providing defined contribution plans. That's why, this past Monday, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, Minister of Finance, introduced a motion in this House calling for a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan. We know how important this is for future Ontario retirees, as about two thirds of all Ontarians do not have a workplace pension, and we hope to receive the support of the Legislative Assembly in passing this important motion.

Indeed, we've been busy on the pension reform file this year. In May of this year, the House unanimously passed Bill 236, entitled the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. It built upon the recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions, and extensive consultations with stakeholders will help the pension system adapt to economic changes while balancing the need for benefit security. Specifically, the reforms enacted in Bill 236 upon the drafting of necessary regulations will make

it easier to restructure pension plans affected by corporate reorganizations while protecting benefit security for plan members and for pensioners. It will clarify and extend the benefits to plan members affected by layoffs and eliminate partial windups. It will increase the transparency and access to information for plan members and for pensioners. It will enhance the pension regulator's ability to oversee pension plans and it will improve plan administration and reduce compliance costs.

We've been clear from day one that Bill 236 was the first part of a multi-step process to update and improve the employment pension system, a point we reiterated in the 2010 budget, where we committed to introducing further pension reforms. The introduction of Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, fulfills that commitment.

This is an appropriate time for me to give some more specific details on the amendments to the Pension Benefits Act that we are proposing under the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. At present, there are two types of pension benefits that pension plans are authorized to provide under the act. The first is defined benefits, or DB for short, and the second is defined contribution benefits, or DC for short. The Pension Benefits Act also authorizes pension plans to provide other benefits that are called ancillary benefits. The amendments would introduce two new categories of benefits into the act. The first category would be target benefits and the second category, optional benefits.

1340

The amendments also relate to the payment of defined contribution benefits. The new section 39.2 of the act would establish that for a benefit to be a target benefit, two criteria need to be satisfied. The first is that the employer's obligation to contribute to the pension fund would be limited to a fixed amount set out in one or more collective agreements. Secondly, the administrator has unrestricted authority under the pension plan to reduce benefits.

The new section 40.1 of the Pension Benefits Act would govern optional benefits. The new rules would provide that if a defined benefit pension plan provides for optional benefits, members could obtain them by making optional contributions in accordance with the pension plan. Optional contributions can only be used to provide optional benefits.

The new section 39.1 of the Pension Benefits Act deals with defined contribution benefits and would govern the payment of pensions and pension benefits under pension plans that provide defined contribution benefits.

Bill 120 also deals with funding requirements. Lower than usual returns in equity markets and low long-term interest rates have left many defined benefit pension plans less than fully funded. This government recognized that if funding rules were strengthened, plans would be better positioned to withstand market downturns and promised benefits would be more secure. The amendments would change certain funding requirements under the Pension Benefits Act relating to the funding of sol-

veny deficiencies of certain jointly sponsored pension plans: the funding of benefit improvements for defined benefits, the authority for contribution holidays and the authority to use letters of credit in specified circumstances.

The amendments include a new subsection 1(2.1) and changes to section 10 of the Pension Benefits Act. These changes would enable pension plans that are jointly sponsored pension plans on August 24, 2010, to cease requiring contributions to be made for solvency deficiencies.

If enacted, a new section 14.0.1 of the act would restrict the circumstances in which a pension plan can be amended to authorize benefit improvements.

The amendments also include a new section, 55.1 of the act, which sets out the circumstances in which employers and members would be permitted to reduce or suspend contributions under a pension plan, otherwise known as contribution holidays. However, contribution holidays would not be allowed if prohibited by the pension plan.

If enacted, a new section 55.2 of the act would prescribe the circumstances in which an employer would be permitted to provide a letter of credit to partially cover contributions under a pension plan that has a solvency deficiency. Multi-employer pension plans would not be permitted to use letters of credit. Also, public sector pension plans, except certain prescribed public sector pension plans, would not be able to use the letter of credit.

We're also addressing the issue of entitlement to surplus. The Expert Commission on Pensions had this to say: They observed, "Employers, active members and retirees have been engaged in conflicts over surplus use and distribution since at least the mid-1980s." Long-standing debates about surplus entitlement and the costly litigation that often results underline the need to reform a process that the commission called "unnecessarily cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive." If passed, Bill 120 would address these issues for both ongoing plans and plans that are being wound up and provide a binding dispute resolution mechanism to address surplus allocation issues when a plan is wound up.

The amendments that we're proposing today would include changes to the current requirements of the Pension Benefits Act that govern the payment of surplus to employers. Currently, the requirements are set out in sections 78 and 79 of the act. The revised requirements are set out in the new sections 77.11 and 77.12 of the act, as well as in the amended sections 78 and 79.

As it now stands, the act specifies that surplus may be paid to an employer if the employer can establish entitlement or if there is an agreement of the employer and certain specified persons. If Bill 120 is passed, the amendments, along with the corresponding changes to the regulations, would clarify the rules for surplus distribution.

If enacted, a new subsection, 77.11(5), of the Pension Benefits Act would clarify that a written agreement may be used to authorize the payment of surplus to an em-

ployer out of a continuing pension plan as well as out of a pension plan that's being wound up in whole or in part. The subsection sets out requirements that would apply with respect to the agreement. If these provisions are enacted, the agreement would prevail over the documents that create and support the pension plan and the pension fund.

The introduction of a new section, 77.12, of the act provides for the use of arbitration to allocate surplus in connection with the windup of a pension plan. The circumstances in which arbitration could be used are specified in the amendments. An arbitration award would prevail over the documents that create and support the pension plan and the pension fund.

In the past few years, the McGuinty government has made great strides to stabilize and to improve the pension benefits guarantee fund, or the PBGF for short. The pension benefits guarantee fund provides protection for Ontario members and beneficiaries of most registered single-employer defined benefit pension plans in the event of a plan sponsor insolvency.

It's the only fund of its kind in Canada, and it operates at a subnational level, unlike its counterparts in the US and in the UK. Participation is mandatory for most registered single-employer defined benefit pension plans, with annual premiums based on per-member and partially risk-related fees.

The Expert Commission on Pensions was established by this government and recommended a study of the PBGF to be undertaken in its 2008 report. The name of the report was, *A Fine Balance: Safe Pensions, Affordable Plans, Fair Rules*. We heeded the commission's advice, which resulted in the report *Looking Ahead: Projecting Ontario's Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund*. The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the sustainability of the current PBGF structure. Based upon the recommendations of this report, we're proposing to make amendments to the Pension Benefits Act as part of our four-point plan to strengthen the PBGF over the long term, as we announced in August.

Paragraph 1 of section 85 of the act currently specifies that the fund does not guarantee pensions and pension benefits under a pension plan established for less than three years on the date of the windup; paragraph 2 of section 85 currently specifies that it does not guarantee increases to pensions and pension benefits that take effect within three years before the date of the windup. Amendments would extend these three-year periods to five years.

Additional steps to strengthen the PBGF, such as increases in assessments, would be made in the regulations.

Our proposed amendments contained in Bill 120, the *Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010*, also include changes with respect to the administration of pension plans. The enactment of new section 22.1 of the act would clarify the circumstances in which fees and expenses may be paid from the pension fund in respect to the administration of pension plans. The new section provides that reasonable fees and expenses for the

administration of the pension plan and the administration and investment of the pension fund would be payable out of the pension fund. Certain exceptions are specified in the amendments.

Clause 42(1)(a) of the act currently authorizes a former member of a pension plan to require an amount to be transferred to another pension plan if the administrator of the other plan agrees to the transfer. A new subsection 42(1.1) specifies the classes of the pension plan to which such a transfer could be made.

1350

Subsections 78(4) and (5) of the act currently provide for the reimbursement of an employer for overpayment into a pension fund. Those provisions would be re-enacted as a new section 62.1.

A new section 80.3 of the act would apply when Ontario public sector employees are transferred as a group to the federal public service. This new section would govern the transfer of assets in these circumstances.

We're proposing in the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, to make positive changes to improve regulatory oversight and enforcement.

Amendments to section 8 of the act would authorize the superintendent to appoint an administrator for a pension plan or to act as an administrator in certain prescribed circumstances. Currently, section 71 of the act authorizes the appointment of an administrator by the superintendent only in connection with the windup of a pension plan in whole or in part. Section 71 would be repealed.

The proposed amendments also include changes to subsection 87(4) of the act and a new clause 115(1)(h) of the act whereby restrictions could be imposed on the actuarial assumptions and methods that may be used in the preparation of reports about pension plans. Amendments to subsection 87(4) deal with the superintendent's authority to make an order in a particular case, and clause 115(1)(h) would authorize regulations to be made.

Technical changes would be made to the terminology used in section 89 of the act. This section imposes requirements on the superintendent when he or she proposes to make certain decisions under the act.

The superintendent is currently authorized under section 105 of the act to extend procedural deadlines. A new subsection 105(2) of the act would authorize the superintendent to extend deadlines for filing documents, of course subject to certain restrictions.

Finally, this government is proposing changes in Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, to ensure that Ontario's employment pension plans would continue to evolve and modernize. As we know, prior to the McGuinty government enacting reforms under the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, which passed the House and was given royal assent in May of this year, there had not been significant pension reform undertaken in the province of Ontario for more than 20 years. We recognize that regular assessment and improvement of pension laws are required in

order to ensure that pensions in Ontario remain strong and able to meet the needs of their members and of pensioners. That's why, if enacted, a new section 116 of the act would require the Minister of Finance to initiate a review of the act and the regulations or a review of portions of the act and regulations every five years.

The proposed Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, would continue our efforts to modernize Ontario's pension system and balance the concerns of workers, retirees and employers. That's why I'm asking for the support of this Legislature in passing this important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is another one of those bills that are put before the Legislature that are highly technical in nature; however, there are no regulations that come with the bill. Whether this bill is effective or not will, of course, depend on what kinds of regulations are put before the House.

The other problem with pensions that we're seeing in the province today is, of course, the Nortel situation, where many pensioners are in jeopardy of losing a lot of the assets that they have built up in their Nortel pensions. That would cause them very great hardship. This government has put together this package which includes this bill. They could have been working on the Nortel situation, which they obviously haven't done. They've promised a review. I haven't heard what that review has yielded yet. I know the Minister of Finance said he wasn't going to review it—any further review—and then the Premier said that he would review it. Under questioning by our member, the Premier said he would review it, give it one more review, and it would fall upon the Minister of Finance to review that pension plan for Nortel employees. Whether or not that is ongoing and whether or not it's going to be a fair review, given the fact that the Minister of Finance said he wasn't going to review it and the Premier told him, "I don't think so. I think you are going to review it"—I wonder what kind of review that would result in.

Pensions are very important to people, especially in the Nortel situation, where they stand in jeopardy of losing a good deal of their pensions. We'll be interested to hear the debate on this bill and to see whether the government is going to come up with anything that is worthwhile.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened to the highly technical explanations given by my colleague from the Liberal Party. Sometimes, when you get into the highly technical explanations, you can miss the main thrust of what is there and what's not there.

There are three very important things that are not here in this legislation, three things that Professor Harry Arthurs, when he did the pension review for the government, strongly recommended needed to be there. One of his recommendations is that the pension benefits

guarantee fund should be increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500. His reason for that, as he said, is that the figure of \$1,000 was set in 1980, 30 years ago. I don't think anyone needs to think very long or very hard to reflect upon how much the cost of living or how much the cost of retirement has gone up in 30 years. Yet this government seems to believe that a pension benefits guarantee amount of \$1,000 which was set 30 years ago is still adequate today. I can only say to government members, I hope you never have to call on the pension benefits guarantee fund because I don't think it will be adequate for you, just as it's not adequate for anyone else who is looking at their pension not meeting what was promised to them.

The second thing which Professor Arthurs strongly recommended was the establishment of an Ontario pension agency, an agency which would devote itself to looking after those pension funds that are in trouble. God knows, we need one in Ontario today, but that is nowhere to be found in the legislation as well.

Those are two areas where I think this legislation falls far short of what we need in Ontario today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to comment on the remarks by my colleague from Kitchener-Conestoga on Bill 120. As my colleague noted, this whole area of pension reform is something that really has been literally stalled for decades until our Minister of Finance asked Professor Harry Arthurs to review pension legislation in Ontario. He wrote a very extensive report, made about 142 different recommendations, and we announced that we would be addressing those in a phased manner. Between Bill 236, which was the first bill that was phase 1 of those reforms, and this bill that we're debating today, which is the second phase, about two thirds of Professor Arthurs's recommendations are now being addressed, so we are making good progress at working our way through this very complex report.

There are a couple of things here that are of particular interest to my constituents in Guelph. One of them is the whole issue around full funding of pensions and what the rules are around that, because one of the major employers in Guelph is the University of Guelph and there have been some issues about the rules around whether it is fully funded and what needs to be done to top it up. So the added clarity that's coming with these new rules will be very helpful to my constituents in sorting out that problem.

1400

I also have constituents who will welcome new rules around multi-employer pension plans, because unfortunately, when the multi-employer co-operatives pension plan failed, I had a number of constituents who were affected by that, and they will be pleased to see that we're fixing those problems.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 120.

There is a bit of concern that we haven't had the opportunity to caucus this as of yet to get a full understanding of what is taking place. I certainly hope the Minister of Education comments on it, as she said last week, and gives some more insight into what took place, because I found that the depth was a little bit lacking in the explanation that came forward.

Some of the concerns, of course, are coming from Oshawa and General Motors—what took place in the early 1990s with the pensions and what happened there. They were allowed to use pension funds to reinvest in General Motors itself, as opposed to ensuring that the pension fund was fully funded to a level that would ensure that the individuals working there were secure in their retirement. Of course, there was a lot of concern.

I know that previously, at Algoma Steel in Sault Ste. Marie, there was a lot of concern with what took place with the pensions and the restructuring there because the funds weren't in place. When we had the privilege and honour to govern, we certainly assisted Algoma in ensuring that those individuals had a pension. Mind you, it wasn't to the level that they had anticipated because of the change in the economy and everything else that had taken place within that industry.

Also, the pension contribution aspect is very concerning in that there was a holiday period that took place in the past, when we had the privilege and honour to govern, whereby municipalities were given exemptions because of the investments in what was paying off at that time. Had there been some sort of contribution at that time, it would probably have buffered the downturn in the economy for a lot of other areas and would have been very supportive for a lot of individuals. The individuals who were retired who contributed to the pension and the new ones who were contributing didn't have to contribute, because the investments made by previous individuals were very successful in ensuring that the funds were there.

Hopefully, this bill will go on to elaborate and expand on what can be done to ensure there is consistency within the funds.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'd like to acknowledge the member from Halton, the member from Kenora-Rainy River, my colleague the member from Guelph and the member from Oshawa for their comments.

There are a couple of things I'd like to sum up within the two minutes I have. First of all, the Arthurs report was published prior to the economic downturn and under very different circumstances. I would also like to stress and reiterate what the member from Guelph said: This is the second phase of reforms that this government has undertaken. We have a plan, and we are already addressing almost 40 recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions. That means that our reforms to date will have responded to about two thirds of the 142 recommendations in that report, and the remaining recommendations will be considered for inclusion in

future reforms. This really supports the fact that we have a plan. We have a long-term plan that we are looking at. The first stage of the plan, Bill 236, passed unanimously on May 5, 2010; the second phase of the plan, Bill 120, is in the House today. Looking at the demographic of Ontario, the baby boomers are looking toward retirement and planning for that in the future.

Ontario is the only Canadian jurisdiction with the PBGF. In fact, the McGuinty government has proposed a broad package of reforms that continue to further strengthen Ontarians' pensions, and continue to address the concerns of workers, retirees, employers and the self-employed; basically, all the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Applause.

Mr. Norm Miller: A very enthusiastic crowd in here this afternoon—on our side, anyway. Maybe it's a good thing, because we're talking about pensions again, and I'm sure anyone watching—their eyes might be glazing over about now as we discuss pensions once again.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Not at my age.

Mr. Norm Miller: The member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills points out that this is a bill that people his age would very be interested in. It may be a little boring for those watching, but it is important information that we're discussing this afternoon.

We're discussing Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act or, as it's called, Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. That may be a bit of a lofty title; I don't think the provisions in this bill actually accomplish that particular aim. I'm not sure how any bill could, but this government likes to be creative in the names of its bills. I know that we spent a fair amount of time last week discussing Bill 110, the good government bill, and the opposition certainly had a lot of fun giving examples of less than good government by this government.

When you first read Bill 120, you might ask, "Where's the rest of it?" That is because this is a framework bill and the details are in the regulations. So, you know, the devil is in the details. Of course, we don't see the regulations yet. At some point, when they're done, they will be posted and there will be a 45-day period for the public and interested stakeholders to look at them, but legislators won't get an opportunity to debate the regulations. So, the devil really is in the details. This is just framework legislation.

I might point out that the first government pension bill that was passed was Bill 236, and we're still waiting for the regulations to that bill. In fact, there's apparently a big backlog on processing the writing of these regulations. At some point, if I have time, I will cite a letter that I received from MPAC employees in my riding who are concerned about the split pension issue, which they're anxiously waiting to be addressed by regulations from that bill. So, it very well might be that with this bill the regulations won't be written before the next election, I would hazard to guess.

What does Bill 120 do? According to the technical background or the news release issued in August, this bill will modernize funding rules; look at contribution holidays; clarify surplus entitlements; provide new rules for multi-employer pension plans or MEPPs and jointly sponsored pension plans or JSPPs; address the funding shortfall of the pension benefits guarantee fund or PBGF—we have a lot of various initials here; provide temporary funding relief for the broader public sector, including universities; and a number of other measures, such as permit irrevocable letters of credit to be used to cover solvency liabilities and require that pension legislation be reviewed every five years. I'll go into each of these areas in more detail.

First of all, modernizing funding rules. Due to the fact of low interest rates and investment returns on plan fund performance, the government proposes tightening funding evaluation rules and, in particular:

(1) Restrictions on the averaging of solvency interest rates and smoothing of going-concern assets.

(2) Ensure that the difference between market values and the actuarial value of going-concern and solvency assets is not more than 20%.

(3) Require indexing to be valued in going-concern valuations (it is now optional).

(4) Impose solvency concern restrictions on plans at the 85%, rather than 80% funding level.

(5) Enable the government to prescribe acceptable actuarial methods and assumptions.

(6) Require that benefit improvements be funded over no more than eight years, rather than the current 15 years.

(7) Further acceleration of funding will be required where plans are less than 85% funded on an ongoing basis.

I think that list of requirements is basically tightening up the funding and solvency requirements of defined benefit pension plans, which is a positive thing if you are a pensioner, because obviously if you have worked for a company and you're counting on a pension, then the pension needs to be fully funded if you're going to be able to receive the benefits of that pension.

1410

The contribution holidays proposals in the bill:

(1) Expressly permit contribution holidays, unless prohibited by plan documents, only if they do not reduce the plan's transfer rate below 105%. I would say there are probably not too many pensions out there that have a problem with too many assets and too much overfunding.

(2) Require plans to disclose contribution holidays to members, retirees and other beneficiaries of the plan.

There's a section that clarifies surplus entitlement. Proposals:

(1) Require binding arbitration for surplus distribution where entitlement or a sharing agreement cannot be reached.

(2) Allow ongoing surplus withdrawals where there is entitlement or a sharing agreement, provided the remaining surplus is no less than the greater of (i) 25% of

windup liabilities; and (ii) two times the current service costs plus 5% of windup liabilities.

As mentioned, there are also new rules for MEPPs and JSPPs, multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans. That's because they are different than single-employer pension plans, where employees and companies share in the risk.

The new rules will include expert commission recommendations to accommodate different funding rules that recognize the different nature of MEPPs or JSPPs, including a permanent solvency exemption for plans meeting certain criteria, retired member representation in planned governance, and more robust disclosure.

As was mentioned by the parliamentary assistant, there's a section to do with the PBGF, the pension benefits guarantee fund.

The 2010 Ontario budget announced that the government was making a \$500-million grant to the PBGF to stabilize the fund. I'd point out at this point that that was actually against the expert advice of, I believe, the Arthurs report, where they said that any monies going to the PBGF should be in the form of a loan, not a grant. But there was \$500 million contributed. Coincidentally, there happened to be a by-election going on in Ottawa at the time, where there were a lot of Nortel employees who were quite concerned about this issue, and I'll talk further about that when I get a chance.

The new proposed measures include:

(1) raising the base fee per plan member—this is to do with the PBGF—from \$1 to \$5. In addition, there will be a minimum assessment of \$250 per covered pension plans.

(2) raising the maximum fee per plan member in underfunded pension plans from \$100 to \$300, with no cap.

(3) extending the exclusion period under the pension benefits guarantee fund to five years. It was three years, so that means the pension plan would have to be in effect at least five years before it could participate.

If these proposals had been in effect last year, the contributions to the PBGF would have been \$73 million rather than \$43 million; obviously, about a \$30-million increase in funding that would have come about as a result of this bill.

There's temporary funding relief for the broader public sector, including universities. I was speaking to a constituent of mine, Tye Burt, who's involved with the University of Guelph, doing some very significant fund-raising for the University of Guelph—an ambitious plan; I believe it's over \$100 million. He was quite concerned about the rules as they exist now for university pension plans and the constraints they place on universities.

The government confirmed its proposal to extend the time to amortize solvency deficiencies where certain conditions are met. Those are, in fairly abbreviated terms, the areas of the legislation and regulations to address.

As I pointed out, the devil is in the details in the regulations. The bill itself is just framework information. You really need to learn specifics. We'll need to see those regulations.

One of the groups that has a strong interest in pension and retirement living issues is the Canadian Federation of Pensioners. They have taken the opportunity to comment on the backgrounder that was put out in August. I'd like to raise some of the concerns the Canadian Federation of Pensioners sees.

The federation represents some 150,000 members of defined benefit pension plans. Most of these pensioners live in Ontario and are directly affected by the pension legislation and regulations in our province. From their perspective, the success of a defined benefit pension plan is measured by the answer to a simple question: Is there enough money in the plan so that it can meet all of its obligations? If the answer is no, then his or her pension is at risk. If the plan is wound up, say, coincident with the bankruptcy of its sponsor, and the answer is no, then his or her pension will be reduced, as we've seen in the case of Nortel. AbitibiBowater is winding up with an underfunded pension plan. Stelco's pension plan is grossly underfunded, and now even its ownership is in question. Atlas Steel's plan will never be brought back to health.

The Canadian Federation of Pensioners acknowledges that even with strong rules strictly enforced, risks persist, largely because pension plans are subject to the whim of the financial market and its inherent risks. They feel that while government intentions are laudable, proposals for reform fall well short of the mark.

The following are some of the issues they've brought up.

Indexation: The bill does talk a bit about indexation. I'd say that this is one of the areas where we'll need to see the regulations. CFP also comments on the exclusion of indexation from solvency liabilities. They argue that this is directly at odds with the principles of pension reform enunciated in the 2010 Ontario budget. In the section "A Vision for Further Reform," the government stated that the reforms that are the subject of the backgrounder "will be informed by the following principle(s): funding should be required for all benefits that a pension plan provides."

It goes without saying that if a plan is to be capable of funding its promised benefits, then the costs associated with all its promised benefits must be included in the evaluation of the plan's solvency liabilities, and the funding levels must be established on the basis of that valuation. It is unacceptable that the government's funding rules would permit the exclusion of the indexation provision of a plan. Exclusion of indexation provisions would virtually guarantee that the plan would be underfunded to a significant extent.

Plan valuations: The federation also points out flaws regarding the policy that plan valuations be filed only every three years unless the plan has a solvency ratio of 85% or less. I think they've pointed out to me in conversation that many other jurisdictions do annual valuations, and with the new technologies we have, that's not that difficult a thing to do. They argue that triennial reporting masks reality. It permits sponsors to fund a plan as though it were solvent when the reality is that

additional funding is required if the pension promise is to be kept.

Recent economic times would seem to support this argument and prove that the financial status of pension plans can move dramatically over very short time spans, mimicking the swings in financial markets. In 2008 and 2009, annual pension plan asset reductions of 20% were not uncommon. If a sponsor is permitted to wait three years before addressing its plan's funding problem, then, at best, resolution of the problem is delayed; at worst, resolution of the problem is not attained and the plan fails, leaving pensioners with reduced pension payments.

Contribution holidays: CFP also calls into question the provision of contribution holidays where plans are funded to 105%. Given the impact of the recession on plan funds, one might ask if it is advisable to permit contribution holidays at all. As I stated before, I think having too many assets in pension funds is not that common a problem. There was an article last week pointing out that, most recently, most of the defined benefit plans are at 87%. In other words, if they were wrapped up today, you'd get 87 cents on the dollar. They aren't fully funded.

These are just some of the comments from the Canadian Federation of Pensioners. They are well worth considering if in fact the McGuinty government's intention is to "secure pension benefits now and for the future."

I'd like to go on and talk more about the pension benefits guarantee fund, as it is a significant part of this bill. As I mentioned, the legislation does touch on the pension benefits guarantee fund, the provincial pension backstop which was established in 1980 under the Pension Benefits Act. The PBGF operates at a sub-national level, unlike its counterparts in the US and the UK. We're quite unique in Ontario. We're the only province that has a backstop for these single-employer defined benefit pension plans. The other places that do have it, other jurisdictions, are the United States and Great Britain, obviously covering the whole country.

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The PBGF covers 1,580 single-employer defined benefit pension plans intended to be self-funding through annual premiums based on per-member and, partially, risk-related fees. The PBGF is mandatory for most single-employer defined benefit pension plans in Ontario. It provides a benefit of up to \$1,000. Consideration is given to age and length of service as well. The PBGF covers about 1.1 million plan members. Half of those are active members, 36% are pensioners and 16% are deferred pensioners.

Since its inception, the PBGF has paid \$853 million in claims, net of recoveries, which represents 164 claims in respect of 123 companies. Of this total, \$536 million was in respect of only two companies.

The Ministry of Finance undertook an actuarial assessment to evaluate the sustainability of the PBGF. The Eckler report was released in June 2010. The Ministry of Finance and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, provided data on the 1,580 plans covered

by the PBGF. The Ministry of Finance specified 52 main plans that collectively represent 70% of the current claims exposure to the PBGF. The main plans were those plans where the employer was the sponsor of at least one plan that could have a very large impact on the PBGF, either \$500 million in PBGF liabilities or \$50 million in PBGF assessment base.

There is a significant concentration in the manufacturing sector, which represents 59% of all plans, 54% of plan members and 87% of the current claims exposure to the PBGF: "Projections estimate that more than 73% of the plan universe was in a deficit position on a solvency basis. The total deficit for plans in a deficit position was \$9.6 billion and their average funding level was 87%. Plans with 10,000-plus members accounted for \$4.6 billion of the \$9.6-billion deficit. The highest concentration is in the manufacturing sector, contributing \$6.1 billion to the deficit The failure of even one of these very large, underfunded plans could have a significant impact on the sustainability of the PBGF well into the future."

The Eckler report's conclusions go on to say, "At March 31, 2009, the PBGF had assets of \$146 million on a cash basis and a deficit of \$47 million on an accrual basis.... The PBGF currently has insufficient funds to cover new claims anticipated by the Ministry of Finance in 2010. In the absence of external funding, the PBGF funds will be depleted and unable to cover these anticipated 2010 claims."

"On an actuarial present value basis, if treated as a private insurer, the PBGF would require an upfront reserve net of current claims at January 1, 2010 of between \$680 million and \$1.023 billion to cover expected future claims, depending on the desired level of margin for adverse deviation."

"With immediate one-time external funding to cover the anticipated 2010 claims, assessments would be sufficient to cover most expected future claims, but would not be sufficient to cover a future catastrophic claim. Hence, current assessments would be insufficient for the PBGF to be sustainable over the long run due to the volatile nature of future catastrophic claims."

"In addition to the one-time external funding to cover anticipated 2010 claims, an increase in overall assessments in the order of 450% could be sufficient over the long run to cover existing funding loan repayments and expected future claims plus expenses at the present coverage level of \$1,000. If coverage was increased to the \$2,500—as was recommended by the Arthurs report—"a 650% increase in assessments would be required." I think that is clearly why the coverage level, the benefit level, is staying at \$1,000 and not moving to \$2,500.

I'd like to also talk about Nortel, which has certainly been in the news a lot. Of course, the most recent development involving the pension benefits guarantee fund is the government's by-election promise to offer relief to Nortel pensioners through the PBGF. To facilitate this, the Ministry of Finance transferred \$500

million in taxpayer funds to the fund, of which the Minister of Finance said some \$250 million was to cover Nortel interests.

I would like to remind my colleagues that Nortel Retirees and former employees Protection Canada, NRPC, has what they think is a better solution. I would like to read from an open letter to Premier McGuinty which outlines their situation:

"To Premier McGuinty,

"Don't wind up our pension plans!

"On September 30, Nortel's pension plans will be placed in the hands of your government. Twenty thousand former employees across Canada, including a large number who are elderly and in poor health, will be affected by your decisions. We are reminding you that our pension plans represent our retirement savings. It is our money, not the Ontario government's, and we intend to have a say in how it is managed. The time for some fresh thinking and action by your government on protection of pensions and pensioners is long overdue.

"We discovered in 2009 that our pension plan is seriously underfunded. The latest information from Nortel indicates that we will lose at least 35% of our pensions. This estimate may prove highly optimistic for reasons described below. Given a choice in the matter, we would prefer that the assets in Nortel's estate were the main source for reducing our loss, not the public purse. The actions of the federal government in favouring foreign claimants over Canadian workers in bankruptcy court make this unlikely, unless there is a sudden change of heart on the part of federal Minister of Industry, Tony Clement. And now the Ontario government, having already allowed Nortel the opportunity to neglect its funding responsibilities, seems intent on making matters much worse for its retirees.

"Over the past year we have purposefully and consistently asked your government not to wind up our \$2.5 billion pension fund and not to attempt to buy us annuities with the proceeds. The negative impact of windup by annuity is recognized in the 2008 report of the Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions when it recommended that your government 'investigate strategies for reducing the cost of annuities and the influence of the annuities market.' It is clear that windup by annuity will erode even more of our pension incomes. Experienced actuaries and academics tell us that liquidating a very large fund like ours could cause a systemic failure of the Canadian annuity market, which typically can only supply between \$200 million and \$500 million worth of contracts per year. At best winding up our plan will cause a steep rise in annuity prices, which might lead to the purchase of lower-quality products. Furthermore, outrageous as it may seem, we will be forced to pay the costs of this destructive process from our pension fund!

"Windup by annuity is not only punitive to retirees, but it also wastes public funds. In February 2010 many retirees were pleased to hear at last from your finance minister, Dwight Duncan, that the government would honour the commitment of the pension benefits guarantee

fund (PBGF). But since the PBGF's obligation is based on the final size of each Nortel worker's pension, windup by annuity will also cost Ontario taxpayers more money. And the impact is not just in Ontario. Thousands of Nortel workers across Canada who did not have Ontario service are ineligible for the PBGF. They face the full pension cutback. So as a result of windup by annuity, the Ontario taxpayer will fund higher PBGF contributions and across every province, Canadian taxpayers will pay the burden of increased social security costs.

"Fortunately there are more attractive alternatives to windup by annuity. The Ontario Expert Commission on Pensions recommended that your government create an Ontario pension agency (OPA) to keep stranded plans out of windup, thereby avoiding costly annuity purchase while also allowing them to benefit from improving economic conditions.

"So in the spirit of Nortel's era of innovation, the people who helped make Nortel a world-beater have a better idea for you: the financial sponsorship model (FSM). The NRPC and its advisers took the premise of the Ontario pension agency to the financial markets and added some improvements. FSM also avoids buying costly annuities but unlike the OPA, FSM would guarantee a minimum income level that is no worse than windup by annuity while at the same time allowing pensioners to share in long-term investment gains. FSM would ensure that PBGF guarantees for Ontario service are met, but at lower cost to the province. The NRPC and its advisers have canvassed strong Canadian financial institutions with the FSM concept and they believe it is a viable alternative. These institutions are currently dedicating major resources in preparation for a formal response. We now need your government to show the same level of innovation and creativity to help us get the FSM over the goal line.

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"For Nortel pensioners across Canada, FSM provides for the continuation of their pensions without the unnecessary hardships caused by windup by annuity. For the province it offers savings on the PBGF and on social programs, without increased risk. But FSM has other benefits that could prove very significant in the longer term. For Ontario's financial institutions, it provides new opportunities to attract and manage capital. FSM will also be attractive to corporations that offer defined benefit pension plans because it removes unpredictable impacts on their cash flow caused by the need to fund windup by annuity obligations. In no small way FSM could help preserve the existence of defined benefit pensions in Canada. And Ontario would lead the way!

"After September 30, Nortel's pensioners will be on a course towards windup by annuity. But if we start quickly we can chart a different and better course. And we have time for FSM to be put in place simply by amending the regulations associated with the Pension Benefits Act.

"Mr. McGuinty, we need action now!

"Yours truly,

“Don Sproule, national chair, NRPC.”

I might add, not just because he's sitting beside me here today, but the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Mr. Sterling, has been very vocal on this issue. In estimates committee he used the opportunity to ask a series of questions of the Minister of Finance on the particulars of the Nortel situation, and he has also, in the Legislature in question period, on many occasions asked questions that have resulted in the Premier, in his last response—the Premier actually met with some Nortel retirees. Whereas the Minister of Finance had been fairly hard-nosed, saying they wouldn't look at it and giving reasons why, the Premier overrode him, I guess, and said that they would take a second look at this proposal, the FSM model. That is, I would say, the last we have heard, and it may have just been the Premier saying something that he doesn't really intend to follow through on—I'm not sure—but right about now we're waiting for an answer, and there's not a lot of time. I'm sure the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills will probably have an opportunity to speak and will go on further about this particular issue.

What about workers without a pension? Obviously none of what I've touched on addresses workers without a pension, nor does this bill. They represent a significant portion of the population, somewhere between 60% and 70%. I would say that the situation is not good and it's getting worse. A recent TD Economics report indicates that household debt relative to personal disposable income is rising relentlessly. Since the mid-1980s, total household debt as a share of personal disposable income has almost tripled from 50% to 146%. Canadian personal debt has become excessive relative to what economic models indicate is appropriate. The most vulnerable households are at the lower end, holding the highest debt-to-income ratio, about 180%.

A new survey from RBC finds that four out of 10 Canadians over the age of 50 who have assets of at least \$100,000 have retired with some form of debt, so they're retiring and they have debt. It's not a good situation. A quarter of those entering retirement are still carrying a mortgage on their primary residence. One quarter of retirees have acquired new debt. This is interesting to note: The report indicates that inflation and taxes are among the top concerns. Here in Ontario, we've certainly had a great example of how the government is making that 60% to 70% of the population who are trying to save for retirement—they're making the situation worse by continually increasing taxes. We had the health tax, a huge tax increase; we've had the HST, of course, another huge tax increase. The worst thing about the HST is that they also apply it on the management fee of mutual funds. That's a cost of some \$350 million a year in the province of Ontario. This is coming directly out of savings that those 60% to 70% of people are trying to make. They'll have \$350 million less in their nest egg because of this tax, the HST on their mutual funds, as they have a registered retirement savings plan and they try to save for retirement. In my riding, we've had a new tax. The land transfer tax on fractional ownerships is one

small tax, a new one brought in. And of course, we had the eco fees that have now been rescinded. But the report points out that increasing taxes is part of the problem. There's a long list of other increases; I won't go into all the increases.

Ultimately, Ontarians can't find the savings in their disposable income to increase their savings for retirement or even save for a rainy day. This is a significant contributor to the impending pension crisis. It's also one of the reasons that the federal government announced it would undertake modest enhancements of the Canada pension plan. There was a motion before the House that was debated last week. I made an amendment to that motion, recognizing that, yes, it's fine to look at modest expansion of the Canada pension plan, but you also need to take into account the state of the economy. The economy needs to be strong to be able to do that.

I note in today's *Globe and Mail*, actually, there is reference to CPP reform, the title of the article being “CPP Reform Won't Be Easy, Jim Flaherty Warns,” written by Bill Curry. In the article, it goes into some of the feelings of the Alberta finance minister as well. It says: “There appeared to be broader agreement at the time on the idea of regulating the private sector to create a new, lower cost, pension option for workers who do not have a pension. It could also be used by small businesses as a way of offering a pension to employees.” This is coming from the Alberta finance minister, and it's something that I think makes sense to look at for that segment of the population, the 60% to 70% who need to be on their own looking out for further retirement savings.

“Alberta Finance Minister Ted Morton supports this private-sector option, but remains strongly opposed to enhancing the existing CPP.

“Mr. Morton told the *Globe's* editorial board earlier this month that he fails to understand why broad enhancements to CPP are on the table when several studies have shown the problem of insufficient retirement savings is primarily limited to middle-income earners who work for small private-sector employers.

““So why, when you have a fairly narrowly defined retirement-income problem that needs to be solved, why do you come in with a CPP hike that hits everybody?” he asked rhetorically. ‘And particularly, why do you do it when we're trying to come out of a recession and job creation is probably the most important thing governments are doing. In the end, it's a payroll tax.’”

I think those are very valid points, and that was part of the reason I brought an amendment to the motion that was debated last week, that the state of the economy absolutely needs to be taken into account. Personally, I like the idea of examining further this private sector option that Mr. Morton was talking about.

As he points out, the lower-level income earners are relatively well looked after by the current CPP old age security and guaranteed income supplement. Those who are at greatest risk are middle-income earners who in retirement may face a significant drop in their retirement income. The question then becomes, is that the job of the CPP to do?

Further in the article, another point that I think is a very valid point made by Mr. Flaherty, the finance minister of Canada, is that we need “to improve financial literacy among Canadians through education.” I think that is something that absolutely needs to be done. I hope we look further at that.

In almost wrapping up, I did want to just bring a couple of other issues to the table today: some comment from some of the experts on the pension benefits guarantee fund as to the proposals of this bill. The actuary Marshall Posner of Towers Watson “predicted a mixed reaction for corporations: ‘For a lot of employers, it will not change requirements beyond what they are already doing.’”

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Whereas the union representative Scott Perkin, president of the Association of Canadian Pension Management, “expressed disappointment the province will try to maintain the pension guarantee fund, saying it may provide a false sense of security, while doing nothing for members of strong plans.

“But a leading union official expressed regret the benefit will not be increased to secure pensions of up to \$2,500 a month,” and I went through that in some detail.

I did want to also get on the record the fact that I’ve had constituents concerned that Bill 236—the regulations still haven’t come out for that. They haven’t addressed the split pension issue, and there seems to be some backlog with the writing of those regulations. As I’ve mentioned, this bill—the details really are in the regulations as well, but there’s this split pension issue that affects workers who work for MPAC; it affects paramedics.

I have a long letter here. I won’t read the whole thing, because I know the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills would like to share some time with me and, Madam Speaker, I’m asking that he be sharing my time. He’s passing me notes because I know he’s quite keen to speak on this. He’s chomping at the bit to speak. So I will not read the whole letter, but just the end of it, from MPAC employees, which states:

“As you may recall, after two years reviewing various pension matters, the November 2008 report and recommendations of the Expert Commission on Pensions to the Ontario government at chapter 5, and in particular section 5.3, included and underscored the real need to resolve such long-standing concerns as past divestments in the late 1990s and the ensuing split pension problems of Ontarians such of as these. In its report, the commission’s recommendation 5-5 said that the government should promptly address the pension arrangements for groups of public service employees affected by past divestments and transfers.

“We’re hopeful”—and this is a letter to the Premier; it’s the last bit of a three- or four-page letter—“you can appreciate people’s frustration around the long-standing split pension difficulties, and trust you agree that it is neither fair or reasonable that these employees/plan members be adversely affected for the rest of their lives

through a government divestiture and pension decisions not of their own making or choice. We all simply want fair pension treatment and to rightfully retire one day without unfair financial or post-retirement insurance coverage worries. We’re hopeful you can be of assistance to finally and fairly facilitate a resolve.

“Thank you for your anticipated attention to the foregoing, and we would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience. We trust we can expect your assistance and co-operation to please ensure those indicated (below) also receive a copy of this correspondence.”

That was from MPAC employees to the Premier. I might add that in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, I have been hearing from frustrated MPAC workers—some who have postponed retirement because they need this issue addressed before they can retire or it doesn’t benefit them. So I would certainly ask that the government look at speeding up the process, to do with the previous pension bill, Bill 236, of getting those regulations written.

In conclusion, I certainly would agree that pension reform is necessary and important. I think those who are counting on a defined—you know, you work for a company and you’re counting on a defined benefit pension plan for your retirement. In many cases, you can’t make the contribution to an RRSP because that plan counts toward your RRSP limits. Then, if it’s not properly funded, you can be in a bad situation when it comes time to retire. I think if you’re going to have defined benefit pension plans, then they need to be properly funded.

I do think the private sector world is certainly moving toward defined contribution or target benefit plans, where the company has no liability, where they’ll make a contribution and so will the employer. Then it’s worth whatever it’s worth, depending on how it’s invested.

For those who aren’t aware, a lot of people expect and think that members of provincial Parliament have a defined benefit plan. That is, in fact, not the case. It is the case in Ottawa, where they have the gold-plated pension plan. That pension plan was actually done away with by a past Premier, Mike Harris. I’m not sure he’s so popular with some of the members around here for doing that, but that was a commitment he made, and he did, in fact, follow through. I don’t think most people in the public are aware of that.

In fact, the plan that MPPs have is one that most of the private sector world is moving towards, which is where we make a contribution, the employer makes a contribution and it gets invested in a mutual fund of our choice. Its worth is based on the markets and how long you work here. That’s what most of the private sector world is moving towards.

One of the consequences of tightening the rules for defined benefit plans, I would guess, would be that companies, particularly for new hires, are not going to be offering defined benefit plans; they’re going to be offering defined contribution plans.

I would also comment that, really, we’re moving into a situation where the reality of public sector workers is

very, very different than the reality of private sector workers. You have this life in the public sector where you have some pretty short time frames and factors to the point you're entitled to get your pension, so you may be retiring at 54, age-wise, and living to be 95. All of a sudden, you work for 30 years and you're retired for 40. If we were looking at it honestly, we'd recognize that that is not sustainable, so something needs to change in the public sector as well, going forward. Remember, it's those 60% to 70% of people who don't have any pension plan at all who are paying for those public sector plans through their taxes as well, so I think that's something.

You just need to look around the world these days: at France, where they're trying to make a change of the retirement age from 60 to 62—there are strikes going on in the streets—or England, which has hit the financial wall fiscally, and it is connected with pensions. They've hit the wall. All of a sudden, they're facing a situation where they're having 20% reductions in their budget, which is having huge consequences in terms of the services they're able to offer and huge consequences for the public service, where they're looking at 500,000 people losing their jobs. That's not a situation I want to see in Ontario.

Unfortunately, the course that the Ontario government is on right now, where they've greatly ramped up spending, where we had a \$20-billion deficit last year and we're looking at another \$20-billion deficit this year—a plan that goes on forever, I would say, of deficits, where they have not controlled spending at all, where you see irresponsible settlements with unions of 2%, 3%; I've seen one that's on the table right now for this year, two years after we've had an economic fall-down or collapse, of 5% for this year—a 5% increase. That's absolutely irresponsible of the government of this day, when we're facing a \$20-billion deficit.

If we keep on that course, we'll be England a few years from now, is what I would caution, so we need to change that course. Voters will have a choice to do that next year.

In conclusion, I will simply say that we haven't actually had a chance to caucus this bill yet, because the government just introduced it. We have caucus tomorrow, and we'll be talking about it at caucus to fully discuss the implications.

I will now pass the floor on to the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, who I know has comments he'd like to make.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's the Norman and Norman Show.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The Norm-Squared Show.

I want to say at the outset that Mr. Miller and myself had a briefing from the Ministry of Finance last week. I want to thank them for their very thorough briefing of us. They were quite open and quite good about that briefing, and we all stayed awake during all of it.

I also want to say that this legislation, while being described by my friend from Muskoka as being frame-

work legislation, with a lot in the regulations—I quite frankly don't know, in this kind of legislation, what you can do but take that route.

I will say that this piece of legislation, in my view, has more detail than a lot of the framework legislation we have seen in the past from the government and truly does put forward their intent with regard to reforms in our pension system.

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This legislation, I believe and as Mr. Miller the member from Muskoka has said, doesn't—we haven't had an opportunity to caucus it. I believe that it will receive a large measure of support.

I like the fact that the legislation is providing some further options for the future; for employers and employees to put forward different kinds of plans going forward. As we know, we have defined benefit and defined contribution plans at the present time. This does a little bit of a turn on that by saying you can now have a targeted benefit plan, which is essentially a defined contribution plan but allows the group that is putting forward the pension for the employees to target what they think the benefits of the plan will be. It's clear in the legislation that that will not be backed up by the insurance of the PBGF, the pension benefits guarantee fund.

As well, another twist to this legislation and another option to people in the future will be the fact that you will have an optional contribution benefit plan on top of what you have at the present time, so that in some cases, some employees in certain circumstances will have an enhanced benefit plan at their own option. That optional portion of the plan, again, will not be guaranteed by the pension benefits guarantee fund. That pension benefits guarantee fund will continue to cover only defined benefit pension plans.

As my friend from Muskoka said as well, there are only three jurisdictions in the world that have a pension benefits guarantee fund: one is Britain, one is the United States and the other is Ontario. Ontario is the only subnational government in the world that has a pension benefits guarantee fund. The other two pension benefits guarantee funds have gone broke as well. None of these examples have actually worked out how you have a pension benefits guarantee fund that is sustained and sustainable going into the future.

In a previous bill, we increased the employer's contributions to the pension benefits guarantee fund by \$30 million a year. I don't know whether that is enough, given the fact that over the past seven years, the pension benefits guarantee fund has been enhanced by the general taxpayer to the tune of about \$650 million: \$500 million most recently and about \$150 million in March 2004, when the pension benefits guarantee fund was given a \$330-million interest-free loan to purchase annuities for the Algoma situation.

Unfortunately, those people in our province who don't have a defined benefit pension plan are now in debt to the tune of \$650 million and are supporting people who have a pension plan, when many of them don't have any pen-

sion plan at all. As well, we know that this government put \$4.5 billion, a great part of that going to the defined benefit pension plan, into GM. That \$4.5 billion, along with the \$650 million, means over \$5 billion has been paid by general taxpayers, two thirds of whom don't have a defined benefit pension plan themselves.

This problem cries out for a solution. The government is, I must say, in giving them benefit where they have taken some steps, trying to deal with the problem. I'm not sure they're there yet, but it is at least a step in the right direction with regard to these two bills.

As well, one of the parts of this bill which I have some attraction to is that portion of the bill which allows an arbitration process to be brought forward when there is a dispute between the employee group and the employer with regard to surplus contributions to a pension fund. Instead of going to court, there is an arbitration process, which will be quicker, more definite, and has the force of a court order, as well as, I understand, the legislation.

With regard to going forward, though, I would like to see the government take additional steps to allow more flexibility with regard to other pension situations which arise. I, of course, hone in on the Nortel pension situation which we are now experiencing. This pension fiasco, which resulted out of the failure of Nortel, is perhaps the largest failure of a pension plan in Canada's history. It's further complicated by the fact that about 11,000 to 12,000 of the 18,000 to 20,000 pensioners reside in Ontario, and some don't. So it makes it a very difficult problem to resolve and to put forward.

What I have been trying to do on behalf of the pensioners of Nortel is ask the government to use its ingenuity to try to come up with an alternate solution to having the administrator, who is now seized of the \$2.5 billion—put an alternative to his only option which he has now, and that is the purchase of individual annuities for all of those pensioners. The problem with that plan is this. The way it is structured, as I understand it, is this: That is that—

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: No, it is just hard to speak, Madam Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): If the speaker could continue.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The administrator only has this one choice of buying annuities. As I understand it, as told to me by finance department officials, the purchase of these annuities could take as much and as long as 10 years going out. That's how long it has taken in terms of the Algoma situation. The administrator has to be a clairvoyant as to how this will all fall out. In the end, if he is short money in buying the last pensioner's annuity at the percentage that he has struck as the clairvoyant at the beginning—if there's no money, then he goes to the pension benefits guarantee fund and it must cough up whatever deficiency is there.

There's a great risk, in my view, of the administrator not wanting to be wrong at the end, 10 years hence, and

underestimating what in fact he will be able to provide the pensioners in the first instance.

The pensioners put out an RFP to various financial institutions across Canada and have received some interest, as I understand it. Their closing date was October 15. The pensioners believe that the old or the existing system will provide the pensioners approximately 10% less than they could get from a financial institution if they go that route.

People will be skeptical about what will provide what benefit and at what level. I was very happy with the Premier and the finance minister, who said that they would have a second look at another kind of proposal. Now, fortunately, the Nortel pensioners have another solid proposal with numbers and with the backing of the financial institution to go ahead and talk about that in solid, concrete terms.

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When we were talking about this present legislation, we were talking about an arbitration process and the fact that we have an arbitrator sitting there and trying to work out particular deals with regard to a particular pension. I believe that regardless of the pension we're talking about, regardless of the employment situation we're talking about, no two will be alike. Therefore I believe that it is incumbent on the government to sit down with the various parties and say, "Hey, can we be innovative with regard to this situation? Can we find a better solution? Can we make legislation at this level, at the federal level, which will not penalize other taxpayers, but will provide a better outcome for a particular group?" And I believe that that can be done in the Nortel situation.

I've talked often with the Nortel group, and the leadership of that group does not want to provide their pensioners with a risky scheme. They do not want to provide anything but a solid, financial-based solution to their existing problem. I really would hope and encourage both the finance minister, the finance ministry and the Premier of this province to listen closely and perhaps use some of the kinds of ideas that they have here in introducing a mediation or an arbitration kind of process. I would prefer mediation rather than any arbitration. But if this process could take place so that the Nortel pensioners could see that the government is being open, listening and evaluating the risk and the benefits that any of the Nortel pensioners might receive or not receive, going the old way or the existing way or going some other new and innovative way that the pensioners have put forward and as some financial institutions, as I understand it now, are putting forward—the Minister of Finance in September initially rejected their request, but he did that because he didn't really have a solid proposal on the table. That solid proposal is now there, and so the finance minister and the government can view and look at whether that is reasonable. As long as they do that in an open, transparent way, then I think the Nortel pensioners will be satisfied. They will be satisfied that they were listened to. They will be satisfied that experts talked about the various risks. Perhaps there can be some

options going forward for some pensioners who don't want to take any risk at all and just want to have an annuity, even though it will produce a very low income. But all will be satisfied with the outcome. I think that that's what we're going to have to do as we go forward and we face more and more of these pension crises that may continue to spin out if our economy does not improve.

I would like to say thank you to the government at this point in time for Bill 120. I think there are three or four steps in it which deserve support as well as deserve further discussion. I talked briefly with the government House leader with regard to a committee being struck after so that experts can come forward. I hope that that committee would not go too wide with regard to talking about all of the implications of the Arthurs report but would stick closely to the legislation and the merits of the limits which they have contained in that legislation, and perhaps if there were some compelling arguments that some small parts of it should be changed, the government would see fit to make those changes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Before we go into questions and comments, I just want to acknowledge that we have the government whip from the government of Nova Scotia, Mat Whynott, in our west gallery today.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened with great interest to my two colleagues from the Conservative caucus. I note that they have identified some of the same problems with the government's legislation that New Democrats feel are there.

There are some good aspects to this legislation, but by and large, while we have a pension crisis in Ontario, this legislation tinkers around the edges.

What I had hoped to hear from my Conservative colleagues was more of a statement of what they believe needs to be done to tackle the pension crisis in Ontario. It's not just the Nortel pension plan that is in grave difficulty. The AbitibiBowater pension plan, which affects thousands and thousands of retirees, is in serious difficulty. The Canwest Global pension plan, which, again, affects thousands of retirees, is also in serious difficulty. Yet there is virtually nothing in this legislation that addresses that.

Similarly, over 65% of Ontarians have no workplace pension plan—65% of Ontarians. I think many of those people, just like the folks from AbitibiBowater or Canwest Global, were led to believe that this legislation from the government was going to address some of their issues.

I think they deserve to be told there is almost nothing here to address their issues. But I was hoping, though, that my Conservative colleagues would launch into some of those issues in greater detail.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Certainly, I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate.

Most people, as we get older, we start to look at our pensions. In discussing this with my own children, most of them are sort of, "That's nice, Mom," but they don't really concern themselves. This is something that we need to do to make sure that there are pensions for them in the future, but they're not always paying a lot of attention to this.

Certainly, as was said earlier, to a great extent the large part of this is dependent on the regulations and what comes out in the regulations.

In my own riding, I have seen, on a number of occasions, people who have come through my office about pensions that were underfunded; in particular, the pensions of the co-operative movement and their employees. One of the saddest things to see is people who go into retirement anticipating a certain income, and that doesn't come because the funds don't have the proper funding and the strength they need to be able to support those payments. I certainly have seen that in my own particular riding for myself.

My husband and I have traditionally walked on our pensions. That's what farmers do. We wait for the next generation. My pension depends to a great extent on the success my son has as a farmer—what he is able to send to his mom and dad in terms of pension is what we will have—and what we have done ourselves in terms of savings to RRSPs.

But for those constituents who are part of pension plans, we need to make sure that there is strength there for them, and that's what this legislation will do. As I said earlier, I do have a number who haven't got the pension funds that they were promised and are now suffering as a result.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to add just a few comments with respect to Bill 120, *Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act*.

I did listen very carefully to the excellent comments that were made by my colleagues the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I think that they've made some good comments with respect to this.

This is a sort of structure and framework piece of legislation that basically sets out the intent and purpose of the act, but of course the devil is in the details. A lot of the meat, putting the meat on the bones, is going to be coming from the regulations that will come afterwards.

It all comes down to, is there going to be enough money around, for those people who do have pensions, within their pension plans? Will there be enough money in the plan to serve their needs when they get to the time when they intend to retire?

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I know there have been a number of different groups that have expressed their concerns about this. My colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka referenced the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, which represents some 150,000 members: pensioners with defined benefit pension plans. Again, they're concerned about whether

there are going to be enough resources available within the plan. They also raised a couple of their concerns with respect to reviewing the adequacy of the plans every three years instead of annually, believing that that's a relatively easy thing to do and that's something that we should stay ahead of to make sure that the plans, as we have them, will continue to meet the needs of all the benefit holders.

They're also concerned about indexation: that indexation isn't going to be included in the evaluation of the plan's solvency. Again, that's something that we need to be concerned about because the cost of living is going up. We need to make sure that the plans aren't going to be good enough just for today, but that they're going to be able to survive for tomorrow.

Last, but not least, we of course need to be concerned about all those people out there who don't have any pension plans at all.

We're going to be participating and looking forward to this with great interest as it unfolds.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to start off by saying that the government has made some moves on administration changes, windup rule changes and other things they've tinkered with as far as administration goes. But I heard my colleague from the official opposition say that he was concerned about the 65% of Ontarians contributing to the defined pension plan protection under the PBG fund and how they don't get anything for it.

Well, the NDP had an answer for both of them. We had the Ontario pension plan, which fell on deaf ears; which would have helped the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan so they wouldn't feel left out of the process. We also would have improved the PBG fund for the defined pension plans, which their own expert, Mr. Arthurs, recommended to go to \$2,500 from the present \$1,000, which was in place in 1980. Things have changed in 30 years. Things have gone up. The cost of living has gone up, but the benefits haven't gone up. There was an influx of some money into the pension plan, but trust me, if a major corporation went under next week that fund wouldn't last three years. Gone: and that's 30% to 40% of people's hard-earned pensions they worked their whole life for and their negotiated deferred wages.

If you look at these two bills they've brought forward, there is absolutely nothing for money. It's all tinkering with administration: Who can run it, who can't; when it can wind up, when it can't; what the rules are to wind up. It has done absolutely nothing to give money back to the pensioners who will and have lost their money. It does nothing to protect them in the future. They keep passing the buck to the feds. Well, in my hour presentation I'll tell you what the feds are doing, and it certainly isn't looking too rosy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to thank those people who commented on the speech today: The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, of course, shared my time, but the member from Kenora-Rainy River; the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex; the member from Whitby-Oshawa; and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

I would like to comment that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills did make a number of good points in giving information about the new aspects of Bill 120. The targeted benefit plan: that is really in recognition of these new defined contribution plans, where there is a target benefit that's sort of a goal, but it's not necessarily backed up by either the company, the employer or the pension benefits guarantee fund. As I commented in my remarks, that is, I think, the way that a lot of the world is moving, towards these targets that you're aiming for through defined contributions.

He also made a good point talking about some of the other aspects of the bill: the fact that the bill allows an enhanced plan that once again is not backed up by the pension benefits guarantee fund.

I think he also made some good points about the question—really, about the fact—that the general taxpayers are putting money into the pension benefits guarantee fund. He talked about how last year's budget was \$500 million and there was \$150 million was put back in from general tax revenues to deal with the Algoma situation, and \$4.5 billion toward GM, and really the question of whether it's fair to general taxpayers, most of whom do not have a pension plan but who are contributing toward those who do. I think that is a very valid question that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills brought up. I'm sure the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek will have lots to say in his speech, coming up next.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I ask for unanimous consent that I do 20 minutes on behalf of the NDP caucus. My colleague Mr. Miller would like to do the full leadoff later on this afternoon, if members are in agreement with that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to always refer to Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and not to the name.

The member has asked for unanimous consent to defer the lead. Is that the pleasure of the House? Agreed. Thank you.

The member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to speak to this bill because, like the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I have literally thousands of people in my constituency who are dealing with this issue right now. I'm talking about people who still work for AbitibiBowater, or people who worked for many years for AbitibiBowater or one of the sister corporations. These are people who contributed to their pension plan, some of them for 25, 35 years, and were told they were going to have a decent

pension when they retired. Now, many of them are facing what could only be described as the possibility of a very serious haircut in terms of their pensions.

I know the government wants to pretend that this bill is going to do something to address their issues, just as I think the government has tried to pretend that this bill is going to do something to address the issues of the Nortel pensioners and the Canwest Global pensioners. But in fact, this bill is not going to address their issues at all.

I want to say to the government members that there are some good things in this bill. In some areas, you are doing some good tinkering around the edges. But that's all it is: tinkering around the edges.

There are at least three serious pension problems in Ontario today. One serious pension problem is the fact that we have pension plans that are basically abandoned; the company that was a co-sponsor of the pension plan is out of business, out of existence in Ontario. I guess you could call them orphaned pension plans, and these pension plans need a home. They need some serious work and effort in terms of looking after benefits, continuing investments and the costs of administration.

When Professor Harry Arthurs did his report for the government, he came directly to wrestle with this issue. He said that Ontario needs an Ontario pension agency to look after these orphaned pension plans. He spoke to it very, very directly. He said you need to look after the pooling of the assets, the administration, the investing and the dispersing of stranded pensions. I'm sure we have hundreds of thousands of people across Ontario who need this exact thing to happen. The sad reality is that it's not in this bill. It is nowhere to be found in this bill.

So you have pensioners, such as Nortel pensioners, trying to put forward proposals about how to deal with their pension plan, which is essentially orphaned and stranded. You have AbitibiBowater retirees who may not be in exactly the same situation but are very worried that they're going to be in that situation, and Canwest Global retirees who are in the same situation.

I had hoped that we would see an Ontario pension agency, because anybody who reviews the state of stranded, orphaned pensions in Ontario today knows we certainly need one. But alas, it is not here.

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The second issue is, while we have some pension plans that are not stranded or orphaned, while they're not in that part of the crisis, they are certainly in a crisis in the sense that they are underfunded. The underfunding is to such a level that you actually have not only people who are retired but people who are continuing to work threatened with a reduction in their pension benefit. That's why the pension benefits guarantee fund was established: to ensure that retirees don't suddenly face a situation where they were promised \$3,000 or \$2,500 of a defined pension benefit plan, they deferred their wages, they paid into the pension plan, they did their job, and now all of a sudden they're short.

I've heard some of the government spokespersons say that the pension benefits guarantee fund is going to be

improved—well, not according to this legislation. The pension benefits guarantee fund only guarantees \$1,000 of the pension benefit. So if your pension was \$2,500 a month and now you're being told that it's going to be cut back to, say, only \$1,200 a month, the pension benefits guarantee fund will only cover part of that. That \$1,000 limit was set up in 1980, 30 years ago. I don't need to tell everyone how much inflation has eaten into things in 30 years. If the government were really going to address the pension crisis, it would address this. Professor Arthurs said the pension benefits guarantee fund, just to keep pace with the inflation that has happened since 1980, needs to be set at \$2,500. That should be the guaranteed level. But alas, that's not in the legislation.

I think the other pension crisis we're facing is 65% of people in Ontario have no workplace pension. Think about it this way: Think about somebody who was born in 1960, went to work in 1985 at 25 years old, and now, in the year 2010, is 50 years old. Sixty-five percent of those people in Ontario have no workplace pension. They're dependent, essentially, on Canada pension, old age pension, and whatever they've been able to set aside as RRSPs. They're not going to make it. We've got a serious problem that is going to become more serious. I look in this legislation to see what is there. What is there to start to address this? Sadly, nothing. Again, lots of tinkering around the edges but a failure to deal with what I think are the three most serious problems: stranded orphaned pensions, pensions that are not going to be able to meet what they guarantee people, and the issue of the 65% of Ontarians who have no workplace pension.

New Democrats have proposed on this latter issue a solution. It is modelled similar to the Canada pension plan but we call it the Ontario retirement plan. It seems to me that we should be addressing this, that we need to address this, that if we really care about the issue of pensions in Ontario and people not retiring in poverty this has to be addressed.

I want to be very clear about one of the benefits of a retirement pension plan. One of the things we know—and we're told this by actuarial scientists, mathematicians who have looked at pension plans, who say to us that the most efficient pension plans, the pension plans where you get the most cost effectiveness, are pension plans like the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, the hospitals of Ontario pension plan, the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Pension Plan and the Canada pension plan, where you have a broad base of workers and they're sharing, they're pooling in terms of the cost of administration, the cost of investment and so on. These are very cost-effective plans.

What we propose is exactly that for Ontario: an Ontario retirement plan where those 65% of Ontarians who have no workplace pension would be able to pay their contribution, it would be matched by a similar employer contribution, and the whole system would be managed broadly the same way the teachers' pension plan is, the same way the hospital pension plan is, or the same way the Canada pension plan is. It would be

managed so as to ensure the greatest benefit for that large pool of workers.

Let me just tell you where a lot of money would come from for this. One of the things we know is that, using 2007 Statistics Canada estimates, it's estimated that Canadians are spending almost \$15.6 billion a year to have their retirement options managed by private entities out there: banks and insurance companies. The bulk of this is spent for retail management fees of various sorts levied by banks, insurance companies and their wholly owned mutual funds. What if millions of these people who want to save for their retirement could, instead of paying these retail rates which the banks want—and by the way, I don't think the banks need any generosity. Banks are doing quite well in terms of their profit levels. Most of the insurance companies are doing quite well. They pay their executives huge bonuses, not to mention huge salaries. I don't think the banks or insurance companies need any looking after here; they're doing fine. It is all those people who are struggling trying to find a secure retirement who need our help.

Imagine if all those people who were paying the exorbitant management fees demanded by the banks and the insurance companies and some of these mutual funds could actually be part of a very cost-effective Ontario retirement plan. If those contributors could pay the wholesale administrative costs that you find with the larger public pension plans like the teachers' pension plan, or the hospital workers' pension plan, the fees that they're now paying to banks and insurance companies would be reduced by \$8.4 billion a year. Equivalently, the money that could be set aside for their retirement would increase by \$8.4 billion a year. That's \$8.4 billion a year going into people's retirement funds rather than going to bank fees, mutual fund fees and insurance company fees. That's what we think we should be doing—very cost-effective. Again, the actuarial studies have shown, over and over again, the efficiency benefits, the cost-effectiveness of these broadly based pension plans.

To put it differently, what you get if we set up a broadly based Ontario retirement plan which is run on a not-for-profit basis, which doesn't charge these exorbitant mutual fund fees, bank fees, insurance fees that you see out there right now operated by Bay Street: The resulting 1.2 percentage point reduction in annual costs is equivalent to a 24% boost in the ultimate pension that the retirement savers can purchase. So you're only taking 1.2% away from the fees of banks, insurance companies and mutual funds, but you're adding 24% to the retirement benefits of people who don't have retirement benefits or whose retirement benefits are grossly inadequate.

This raises the important question of why all retirement savers should not have the opportunity to pay wholesale pension fees rather than the retail pension fees that are now being charged by banks and mutual funds. Addressing it requires recognizing that the private financial services industry is the beneficiary of the current annual \$11.2-billion retail cash flow which, calculations show, would fall by \$8.4 billion to \$2.8 billion with

wholesale pricing such as you could get from the Canada pension plan, the teachers' pension plan or the Ontario retirement plan.

1530

I can also show that this wouldn't bankrupt the banks, it wouldn't bankrupt the insurance companies and it wouldn't bankrupt the mutual fund industry. They would still do fine. They would do very well. But, boy, would it ever go a long way to helping out those people who have no workplace pension at all and those people who have entirely inadequate retirement benefits and who are looking toward trying to retire in 10 or 15 years, or who know that they will be retired by the market in 10 or 15 years in terms of the so-called workplace or labour market.

I think these are the things we really should be addressing and debating here today, because these are the real pension issues. This government can tinker around the edges, as it's trying to do with this legislation, and pretend that it's really doing something, but I think anybody out there who is nearing retirement age or anybody who is in one of those stranded orphan pension plans—such as Canwest Global or Nortel or anyone who is dealing with a pension plan like the AbitibiBowater pension plan, where they're being asked to take a haircut in terms of the pension benefit—would agree with me that this legislation doesn't come anywhere near doing what needs to be done.

If I may, Speaker, I think this is one of the most significant economic security, financial issues that people in Ontario face today. Part of me wonders why the government scheduled this debate on municipal election day. I think it's something that deserves much broader discussion. I wondered when I saw the schedule if the government was hoping to sort of duck this debate in behind or below municipal election day, because this debate deserves broad discussion, debate and cross-examination across Ontario.

One of the things that the so-called private insurance or the private retirement business tells you is that people who put their money in mutual funds, bank funds or insurance funds get the benefit of ongoing, day-by-day advice and evaluation and the opportunity for liquidity and so on and so forth. Well, for somebody who is trying to play the stock market on a day-by-day basis, those may be valuable things. But I don't know anybody who is trying to save for their retirement who's interested in trying to play the stock market on a day-by-day basis.

Many of the services that the private investment industry says they give or provide to people who are trying to save for their retirement, like day-by-day valuation, opportunity of liquidity and so on—frankly, I don't think those things are really of value to people who are trying to save for their retirement. I don't think they're really valuable at all.

I come back to what I think is the real issue: How can we best help millions of Ontario retirement savers who want adequate pensions at affordable savings rates but who don't want to get mired in the complexities of investing, who don't want to be on the computer screen for an hour every day looking at this issue and that issue?

The best way to do that is through an Ontario retirement plan to duplicate the success of the Canada pension plan, to duplicate the success of the teachers' pension plan, the hospital workers' pension plan—the most cost-effective, efficient way to do this for people. Alas, it's nowhere to be seen in this legislation.

I've listened to the principal government spokesperson get up and speak and listened to other people get up and comment for the government, and none of them wants to go anywhere near this. They're all happy with a piece of legislation that frankly only tinkers around the edges and doesn't address the three principal issues of pension plans in Ontario today, of inadequately funded pension plans in Ontario today and the fact that 65% of Ontario workers have no workplace pension at all. Those are the things we should be dealing with here today. I feel badly for those people who have an orphaned pension plan, because they heard nothing much in this debate from the government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Certainly, I think the member from Kenora–Rainy River made an excellent contribution to the debate today. There's no question that one of the biggest policy issues that all of us in this Legislature, indeed across Canada, are going to have to deal with is the whole issue of pensions, when you think that by 2017 there will be more people in Ontario over age 65 than people under age 15. We know this is an issue that we're all going to need to address.

Interestingly enough, I just got a quote from the recent Australian study that was done by Mercer, one of the largest international actuarial firms. They rank Canada's pension fifth among 14 countries, ahead of the United States, the United Kingdom and France, recognizing that more needs to be done in this area. They had a global pension index score that looked at adequacy, sustainability and integrity. But I say again, this is an issue that is going to take a lot of discussion.

My characterization of Bill 120 would be perhaps a little more generous than “tinkering,” but I think it's a piece of legislation that indeed will be among a number of other pieces of legislation that I think will come forward to look at the whole issue of pensions. I know that in my particular case, I have introduced two private member's bills dealing with pensions.

I also would recommend to members a report that was released just last week by the Senate standing committee on banking, trade and finance—I have a copy—under the leadership of the Honourable Michael Meighen. It addresses one of the concerns raised by the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I reference page 47, where Mr. Keith Ambachtsheer—I apologize for the pronunciation of his last name—who is with the Rotman International Centre for Pension Management, indicated the cost for private plans versus public plans. I'm going to be able to speak to this issue in a day or so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I enjoyed listening to my friend talk about this particular issue, and I agree with him: there are many issues left open that need to be resolved. But if we can't fund a fund that provides for a maximum of \$1,000 from the pension benefits guarantee fund, who is going to fund one that has a pension benefit fund for \$2,500 into the future?

I hope the member is not going to say that the general taxpayer is going to have to pick this up with regard to that enhancement if two thirds of general taxpayers don't have a defined benefit pension plan. As well, when you talk about orphaned plans, you eventually come down to the question, “Who is going to pay?” I don't think that the general taxpayer has any obligation to pay for those orphaned plans. I just don't believe that.

If the union and the company made deals and didn't fund their particular pension fund to adequate levels to keep it properly funded, I don't believe the rest of the population should be required to step up and fill the coffers, because they don't have any pension fund. They don't have any defined pension fund.

1540

I agree that it would be nice to have other plans or other options. I believe the federal Minister of Finance is trying to expand the CPP but is not getting much help from provinces like Alberta, which I'm sorry to see. We do have to move forward, but we have to figure out who's going to pay the piper.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River for his comments. It was interesting to hear the official opposition talk about where we are going to get the money and why should people who don't have pension plans contribute? That's a good argument. However, of the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a defined pension plan, a lot of them could end up on social services, and where's the money going to come from then? It's going to come from the taxpayers.

I might point out to the member that as our investigations continue in here, there are hundreds of millions, probably billions, of dollars that are wasted on projects, consultants, things like that, over a year that would more than fund the pension plan. I'll just take eHealth, for example. I believe it was 66% of the money spent in the last five years on eHealth—out of \$388 million, 66% went to consultants. Some \$288 million in five years—one ministry. Multiply that by the 22 major ministries, and it could even go a lot higher, into the billions.

Where's the money coming from? Government waste, consultant waste—and it would more than help the poverty in this province. It would more than help to pave the roads. It would put a lot more people back to work, and it would also secure the pensions of people who have worked their whole lives on deferred wages and have negotiated pensions honestly and upfront rather than taking raises from the employers. Employers should honour their commitment to the union people and non-union people, and they don't. They roll up plans and

leave the country. They fold factories and leave us holding the bag. Unacceptable, and there are lots of answers to where money goes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today and respond to the comments from the member from Kenora–Rainy River. It wouldn't surprise anybody that people bring different perspectives to this issue, and that's what the House is for.

I listened intently to the comments that were made. I think it's important that we frame our remarks around what is exactly included in Bill 120. It's a broad package of reforms that are designed to strengthen Ontario's pensions. We've had one of the worst recessions—certainly in my lifetime—we have all been through in the past few years, and we're taking a phased approach to this, in my estimation.

We had the first phase go through the House in May of this year that was endorsed by all members of this House. Everybody supported that, as I understand it. Members of the public, I think, should be aware of and those who are involved in the pension plan in a more intimate way will be aware of the fact that before we started to make these changes back in 2009, largely the rules for pensions in the province of Ontario had not been changed for about 20 years. The world had definitely shifted under our feet in that time.

The second stage of reform would address about 40 of the recommendations that came forward from the expert commission. That commission made about 142 recommendations after studying this issue at some length and with some depth. So that will bring us up to, with the passage of 120, if it passes—and I certainly hope it does pass because it moves the issue further ahead—it may not move it to the point where the member from Kenora–Rainy River wants it to be right now. Hopefully, it will get there in the future as we include future reforms, but it provides a framework, for example, to the multi-employer pensions, something that's of particular interest to some organizations that are in my riding and really concerned about the impact of proposed changes on their members. I think this moves us ahead and is worthy of support of all members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for their comments. I want to respond first to my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I think we would all agree that in terms of defined pension benefit plans, all defined benefit plans should in effect contribute to the pension benefits guarantee fund, that defined benefit plans collectively should provide the insurance for defined benefit pension plans.

As he knows, there have been times over the last 30 years where different governments have had to step in and put money into the plan. But by and large, if you reflect on that, when that has happened, in the longer term, government has gotten a lot of that money back; a

lot of that money has come back. So, providing that insurance fund for defined benefit plans, I would argue, has been very successful social and economic policy.

Where do you find the money for the \$2,500? In fact, when you sit down and do the math, a pension benefit guarantee level of \$2,500 is not going to require exorbitant contributions from employers and beneficiaries. It will require some contribution, yes, but I think the way we get there is to phase it in over a period of years. But the failure to deal with it, in my view, is just inexcusable, given the number of pension funds that are in trouble.

I want to follow up on the comments from my colleague here from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. One of the problems, one of the issues, is, I look at the Nortel pension plan and I remember all the executives at Nortel who, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, were making off with bonuses—\$10-million, \$20-million, \$30-million bonuses were not unusual. There is a lack of justice to that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 65, An Act to revise the law in respect of not-for-profit corporations / *Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les organisations sans but lucratif.*

Bill 68, An Act to promote Ontario as open for business by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 68, Loi favorisant un Ontario propice aux affaires en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

Bill 103, An Act to proclaim the month of June Italian Heritage Month / *Projet de loi 103, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine italien.*

Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North / *Projet de loi 191, Loi relative à l'aménagement et à la protection du Grand Nord.*

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate on Bill 120?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the government of Ontario to release the details of the province of Ontario's agreement with Samsung.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? No.

Further debate on Bill 120.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 120. I believe I have 20 minutes to talk about this very important bill.

Before I get into the context of the bill, I just wanted to talk about the circumstances, which are important to discuss, as to why reform of our pension system is extremely important. I think one of the most looming situations, and my colleague the member from Oakville alluded to it, is that we have seen some significant changes and shifts taking place in our economy. This recession which we are in the process of living through has been extremely grand in scale. It has been devastating to economies around the globe. I think we know what's happening in Europe in many countries. It's very monumental in terms of the way the economies are being shaped. But it has obviously had a huge impact on our economy as well across Canada and Ontario in particular. As a result we're seeing that our systems, which were designed some time ago—and, as I understand, in the case of our pension system, nothing has been done for the last 20 years or so. Our assumptions have been challenged. It is extremely important that we make a systematic review of our pension system to ensure that we put in place reforms that bode well for Ontarians moving forward, but also reforms or changes that ensure that future generations' needs are met.

1550

The other point, I think, in terms of the context around this debate is the fact that most Ontarians—I believe 60% of Ontarians has been alluded to before—do not have a workplace pension. I am one of those people: All members here do not have a pension. But I can also say that from my previous employment, before being elected to the Legislature, I never had any pension, nor did I have any illusions that I would have a pension.

In many instances, for my generation, I would argue, the debate is quite different. It's not about how to protect our pensions, how to make them more secure and how to grow them because we never had any pension. My assumptions, my economic planning for the rest of my life, are not based on a defined pension plan. And I'll be very honest with you: neither am I planning to have a pension. My focus is more on post-retirement income.

And I'm not the only one. I actually was having the same conversation a few days ago at a United Way event in my riding of Ottawa Centre with some people of a similar age. We were having this discussion as to pensions and no pensions. I think they were federal government employees, and they were discussing their plans and how the focus for them, as they're planning their lives, is not the pension but other aspects of post-retirement income.

My hope is that as we are reforming the pension system, we also look at and keep in mind creating a more vibrant and strengthened post-retirement income system so that those of us who may not have a defined pension plan will still be able to save money, grow that money

and be able to use that in our retirement—which is some time away, but it is important that we start planning for that.

The background to this debate is extremely important. As has been mentioned a few times, the government of Ontario is in the process of a multi-phase reform of the Ontario Pension Benefits Act. The idea is to modernize the legislation and strengthen regulation of workplace pension plans in Ontario. The Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, tabled a bill before—part 1 of the reform, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, which was unanimously passed by this Legislature—which did a few things. It extended the benefits of plan members affected by layoffs and eliminated partial windups, which means more people will get more pension benefits in more circumstances. It also made it easier to restructure pension plans affected by corporate reorganization so coverage can continue for affected workers. Lastly, it increased transparency and access to information for plan members and pensioners.

I recall in that debate that there was a general consensus that those were important changes and they should be supported, and all members did support that.

Bill 120 deals with what I like to take as more complicated situations now, which were part of the recommendations by Mr. Arthurs on pension reform. Now it's starting to take a little bit more contentious issues and address them as we strengthen and modernize the Pension Benefits Act.

What are we doing in the second stage of reform? The bill is addressing almost 40 recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions, which was led by Mr. Arthurs, which means that the reforms to date will have responded to about two thirds of the 142 recommendations in the report, which is extremely significant. I understand that the remaining recommendations will be considered for inclusion in future reforms, so I guess part 3 of this bill, looking at other aspects, other recommendations that were outlined in the Expert Commission on Pensions.

In broad strokes, what is Bill 120 trying to do? It's strengthening Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvements. It's also trying to provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans. It is clarifying pension surplus rules and providing a dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surplus should be allocated on wind-up.

Lastly, it is providing a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund, which from time to time I will refer to as PBGF, by implementing a strategy to build reserves; increasing revenues; limiting current exposure and reducing risks to taxpayers in the future; and lastly, further extending regulatory oversight and improving plan administration.

No doubt it's extremely complicated stuff. I regret not taking pension law while I was in law school because I

think I would have better understood the changes that are being made, but nonetheless, I think it speaks to how complicated the system is. We need to make sure that system really reflects the changes that are taking place in the economy, in our corporate structures, changes that will ensure that those who have defined pension plans—that those pension plans are protected.

I really want to focus on the pension benefits guarantee fund, the PBGF aspect of it. The reason I want to focus on that is that's something I have been exposed to a fair bit in conversations around the windup of the Nortel pension plan, something, as you may know, I have been quite involved in. Coming from Ottawa and representing Ottawa Centre, I have a lot of Nortel retirees who reside in my riding, and I've been able to work with them and learn from them as to various circumstances that arise out of the windup of pension plans like that of Nortel. Again, it's an extremely complicated issue, multi-layered both in terms of the financial circumstances but also in terms of jurisdictions that are involved. You've got the federal bankruptcy insolvency legislation involved; you've got, provincially, the pension benefits guarantee fund. You've got, of course, in a situation of a windup, courts involved as well, court-appointed administrators, part of the bankruptcy and solvency process which has to work through the windup, on and on. But most importantly, in situations like Nortel, you've got people's lives, people's livelihoods that are very much part and parcel. There is a fair bit of emotion that is part of the exercise. Obviously, in the course of the last few months, almost a year now, having conversations with Nortel pensioners, I've been able to understand all those aspects.

I think the goal at the end of the day is the same for everyone, be it the government, government agencies like FSCO, the administrator, I'm sure, and the pensioners: to ensure that those pension plans are protected to the degree they can be in a very difficult situation where a company, a viable company in the past, a Canadian icon, has gone bankrupt; to make sure that those incomes that are generated through that pension plan are protected to a large extent.

Of course, there are various ideas that have been thrown around. One important one which has been championed by the Nortel pensioners is the idea around the FSM, or the financial services model, which will allow, basically, to take the defined pension plan, put it in the marketplace—in the private market—and be able to then, hopefully, grow and generate income for pensioners.

Now, of course, I fully admit that I am perhaps oversimplifying the proposal, but that's the gist of it. The issue around this is, and what makes this issue extremely complicated, is that balance between having a guaranteed income versus the risk associated with this big pension fund—I believe the Nortel pension fund is in the range of \$1.2 billion right now in the marketplace—when markets are still quite fragile and unstable. Now, one of the things the government did, which was something Nortel pensioners had asked, and I'm very happy and proud that the government followed on that, is to ensure that the PBGF,

the pension benefits guarantee fund, is there for Nortel pensioners. The Minister of Finance, some time ago, about a year or so ago, announced that PBGF is being funded to the tune of about \$500 million. That's half a billion dollars to protect those pensioners and to make sure that the guarantee that PBGF provides by way of a backstop—and that's essentially what it is—is there. In the case of Nortel pensioners, that's about \$250 million dollars being put aside to ensure that Nortel pensioners get a minimum of \$1,000. That is a very important step that the minister took in light of a very difficult situation to ensure that Nortel pensioners are not left aside.

1600

I understand—and I've had many conversations with Nortel pensioners—that they very much appreciate the government extending the funding to PBGF and putting that money to ensure that there is a baseline that is guaranteed for pensioners. The issue becomes: Do we still move ahead with the FSM model and how do we reconcile that tension that exists between risk and guaranteed income? If you go to the FSM models—there's some debate about that, and I totally acknowledge that—it could jeopardize having some sort of a guaranteed pension for pensioners and to what extent should we take that challenge.

The minister had made a preliminary decision but that's being reviewed. The Premier had some opportunity to look into that. I commend both the Premier and the Minister of Finance for taking this issue very seriously, the reason being that we all want the best for Nortel pensioners. There is some detailed analysis that is going on by way of the Ministry of Finance to ensure that we come up with some sort of a right balance in what's being proposed and what is done through the government, through PBGF.

The question becomes—and I'm looking at the clock; I've got limited time—moving forward, how do we make PBGF more sustainable? That is one of the things I wanted to focus on in Bill 120, because it is something that has existed for some time. The pension benefit guarantee fund is something unique in Ontario. As I understand it, the other provinces do not have such a guarantee, and it is unique in Ontario that we have it.

I think the member from Kenora–Rainy River was mentioning that all governments in the past have not really done a good job, regardless of the political stripe. I think they equally have taken the same policy decision not to fund this guaranteed fund properly, making it unsustainable. We came into this type of situation in 2009-10 because of the recession, so extra money had to be put in.

What do we do in the future to maintain the PBGF and how do we make it sustainable? That, I think, really becomes the question. There are some key aspects that I included in this legislation to meet this.

The Expert Commission on Pensions recommended that PBGF be self-financing. The current PBGF assessments are as low as \$1 per plan member per year, with minimum assessment per pension plan. There's also a

\$100-per-member maximum and a \$4-million maximum assessment for pension plans with deficits.

These maximums have enabled some plans with significant solvency deficits to benefit from PBGF coverage at a reduced rate. To mitigate the financial risk and place the PBGF on a more sustainable financial footing, the government, through Bill 120, is considering a four-part strategy that recognizes the need for participation by all stakeholders.

This is what has been suggested: one is to build the PBGF reserves. A \$500-million grant to the PBGF, which I was talking about earlier, helped to stabilize the fund and address financial pressures arising from recent plan windups. Number 2: Increase the PBGF revenue. Make assessments more consistent for covered plans with similar funding levels and raise assessment levels by establishing a minimum assessment level of \$250 for each pension plan covered by the PBGF; raise the base fee per plan member from \$1 to \$5—that's another step that has been taken; raise the maximum fee per plan member in underfunded pension plans from \$100 to \$300; and eliminate the overall assessment cap for underfunded plans.

If these proposals had been in effect last year, when we ran into the troubles—the crisis—this would have raised about \$30 million more in assessments collected in 2009. That's a significant amount of money.

The third thing the bill is doing in terms of making the PBGF more sustainable is it's extending eligibility deferral periods; it's recommended by the commission. It's extending the exclusion period from PBGF coverage for new plans and benefit improvements in existing plans from three to five years, consistent with solvency deficit funding requirements.

Lastly, a big aspect is to reduce the risk as part of this reform package, to implement stronger funding rules to reduce the risk and size of pension deficits in covered pension plans.

All in all, this is an important step to ensure that we can mitigate the kinds of circumstances and situations we experienced through Nortel. I think that's an important step and reform that has been taken in Bill 120, as recommended by Mr. Arthurs and his expert pension commission, to ensure that, moving forward, we've got a more sustainable, strong PBGF, pension benefits guarantee fund, available for situations where we need it.

Those are the points I wanted to cover, so I will end at this, and I look forward to hearing from my other colleagues and wrapping it up in the last two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: With all this discussion on pensions, it gets a little demoralizing when you realize that—most of our pensions in this province, this country and, in fact, most of the western world are designed to provide income to retired people. That income is developed through their contributions, and it's also developed through a reasonable return on the investment that is in the pension fund.

In the past, of course, those investments had to be very, very safe, because they're designed to provide funds for retired people. In the past, those funds could probably be invested at something between a 5%, an 8% in some years and perhaps even a 10% return on investment. In the world that we're living in today, that's gone. We're looking at safe investments now in the range of a 1%, 2% or 3% return on investment.

This evolution in the financial world has placed all pensions in great peril. We look around the world and we see in Japan, for instance—where they went into the recession of 1991 and never really came out of it—that they've had this situation where they've had very low returns. There are very low interest rates in their country, and we've seen the stagnation that has happened in that country.

It's a very worrisome situation that all pension plans find themselves in, and it seems to me that the responsibility for this should rest with the pension plans as opposed to any particular government. Governments should be there to uphold the rules and to make the rules, but not necessarily to guarantee those rules.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: The member from Ottawa Centre made an elaborate presentation. I don't necessarily agree with his synopsis. I can remember several years ago working for the United Steelworkers in Ottawa in nine different campaigns, trying to change the mind of the government on pensions. We warned them then, and the reality is coming home now. For 10 years we've been warning them that defined pension plans are in trouble, that multiple pension plans are in trouble.

Look at what's going on in France right now. The people have taken to the streets. There are riots in Paris and Marseille. Most of the large French cities are in disorder right now. They're calling for the government to resign. What's the topic? Pensions. Pensions and agriculture are the two things that the French people are upset about.

I'll tell you right now that this government has done some fine-tuning on administration, which was needed. It certainly was done. They've done some on windup and they've done some things on administration of the funds—that is good—but they've done absolutely nothing financially to put money in these people's pockets who had defined pension plans. If a major corporation like Chrysler or GM went under tomorrow, the pension fund that's there now, the PBGF, would be dried up in three years. Those people negotiated those plans over a period of 50 years. I'll tell you that if I was putting into a plan for 30 or 40 years of my working life and deferring wages and they said to me at the end of the day, "You only get 40% of what you put in there," I'd be upset too.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: What is this bill all about? Perhaps you're watching this at home, and you're thinking this is a little abstract. Pension legislation is usually a wonderful

non-prescription sedative, but in fact this probably affects you a great deal, particularly if you're in that cohort that was born between 1946 and 1966, because the first of our baby boom generation turns 65 next year. By the time we baby boomers are ourselves seniors, for every senior alive today there will be two at our time. By the time we baby boomers are into our 80s, for every octogenarian alive today there will be three.

It's important that, right now, Ontario gets pensions right, and that's what this legislation aims to do. It aims to strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding so that the taxpayer isn't left picking up the tab for a private sector pension plan.

It aims to provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans, all of which is to say that when a person retires, the money they think is in their pension account actually is and they can be paid a living wage.

It aims to clarify pension surplus rules and provide a dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how a pension surplus should eventually be allocated if it's wound up.

It aims to provide—and this is very important—a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by implementing a strategy to build reserves, to limit future exposure and mostly to reduce the risk to taxpayers in the future.

That, in a nutshell, is what the member for Ottawa Centre was describing. This is a very strong bill and one that deserves the support of all members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

The member from Ottawa Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first thank the member from Dufferin—Caledon for telling me to fix my collar; I appreciate her advice on that. Thanks to the members from Halton, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and Mississauga—Streetsville for their constructive comments on, again, a complicated area of a technical nature. I look forward to hearing from the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, who has had experience in this area. I'm sure he will instruct the debate on this important issue.

I know, from my experiences working with Nortel pensioners in my riding of Ottawa Centre, how complicated the issue is, especially when a company like Nortel, which was a giant in our economy and our country, had to go bankrupt and the challenges associated with winding up that particular plan. Of course, we won't want to be in that situation in the future, so I hope our economy continues to grow stronger and we don't have to face that. But if, for some reason or other, pensions have to be wound up, we need to make sure that our rules are up to date, modern and reflective of the new economy.

I think that is what the government is trying to do through the last bill, which is now the law, this bill and the ones that will come in the future, to ensure we've got a strong pension plan. But I also want to urge again that

we, as a country—not just one province, but the federal government and all the provinces and territories—need to sit down and start talking about post-retirement income as well. There are a lot of people like myself—I don't want to be selfish, but I do speak for one demographic that does not have a pension—and we need to make sure there are strong rules around post-retirement income.

The last point: Those who are watching, please make sure you go out and vote in the municipal elections. It's an important day. Call your friends and family members and encourage them to vote as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is indeed a difficult piece of legislation to understand and to comprehend. I'm sure that there are many people listening at home. I see that the time is a quarter after 4, and I would remind them that Oprah is on.

This has been a fairly dry debate—and it's about to get a lot drier, I might add.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Like a good wine, Ted; like a good wine.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Like a good wine. Unfortunately, it's not maturing.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that pension reform is something that is extremely important. I think that it's something that we can't be very short-sighted about. As I mentioned before, pension incomes come from the people who manage pension funds; their income comes from investments. In the past, those investments might have made something in the area of a 6% to 8% return. Today, that is extremely difficult to achieve, particularly in a so-called "safe" investment. That places pension management fund organizations in a situation of having to manage traditional pensions with a very low return of something in the order of 1%, 2% or 3%. That leaves, at the end of the day, a shortfall in the pension fund. This bill, as I have scanned it and have read some of the comments on it, attempts to close down or to ensure that some of that security is maintained for people who have important pension plans, and that, I think, is a good thing. It's a good objective.

What I don't see in the bill is the ability to make up the difference that fund management plans are no longer able to deliver, particularly on defined benefit programs. Granted, defined benefit programs are becoming more rare. You're not seeing as many of them as you used to. Most pension plans today are defined contribution plans in that you make regular contributions and you end up with whatever you end up with. If it's a return on that money that you contributed, it could be something that you can live on, something that you might expect; otherwise, it may not be.

This bill provides for the plan administrators to set targets, and I think that's a positive thing. The difficulty with setting a target is that it becomes an expectation. Given the financial future that we may be looking at over the next 15, 20 and 25 years, those targets may be extremely difficult to achieve, if not very difficult to set.

As I mentioned earlier, I think the country of Japan has gone through some of the experiences that perhaps we are just entering into. Japan has had extremely low interest rates, extremely low returns on investments, ever since the recession of 1991, which they never really came out of. They've been in a stagnation or in a reduced growth factor in their country for the last 20 years. That may be something that we, in the world economy, are looking at.

At least in the near future, I don't see interest rates beginning to climb, although the cost-of-living index last month was a worrisome 2.9%, I think, in Canada. That would indicate a certain amount of inflation creeping in, which may indicate a rising interest rate, which may indicate all kinds of difficulties for the Canadian economy. Given the competitiveness of the Canadian dollar at the current time, that may cause some serious difficulties for Canada participating, as it has in the past, in international trade markets. Canada is more susceptible to international trading markets' trading than other countries. I think fully 33% of our GDP is export, whereas in most countries, like the United States, for instance, about 2% of their GDP is developed through exported goods. That puts Canada, and particularly Ontario, in a vulnerable position when taken to low interest rates and keeping yourself competitive in the international marketplace.

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Over the last 30 years, Canada got very used to operating with a 70-cent dollar—a 92-cent dollar for quite a while, a 70-cent dollar, 68-cent dollars. That was a huge benefit to us in our world trade and it developed huge manufacturing opportunities. Those days are gone with an even dollar or a 90-, 95-, 96-, 97-cent dollar. That's probably in the ballpark of where our dollar belongs vis-à-vis the United States, although the Americans are doing everything they can to drive their dollar down. As long as they continue to do that, interest rates will continue to be low, and that will put emphasis and extra pressure on pension plans.

I was interested to learn from the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills today that there are only three jurisdictions in the world that guarantee private pension plans: Britain, the USA and Ontario, Ontario being the only subnational government in the world that guarantees private pension plans. That is of concern to me. The pension plan in Britain, if it's not bankrupt, it is nearly so. The government in Britain is bringing in a budget that is going to revolutionize that country. We have seen riots in the streets of Paris. I think we may very well see riots in the streets of London when they bring in their campaign. They're running at about a 20% deficit as far as their finances are concerned, and it will have to be a very extreme budget or at least have some extreme measures in it long into the future in order to bring their house into order.

The United States is in the same kind of situation where their guaranteeing of pension plans is a very difficult position for a government to be in, especially when

such a large portion of the population doesn't have a pension beyond social security or, in Canada, the Canada pension plan, the old age benefits. When so many of our people who have worked and built this country don't have a pension plan, to ask them to bail out, through their tax dollars, the people who do have a pension plan—generally those working for larger companies; by and large they've worked for higher wages throughout their working life—it just seems that there's a tremendous incongruity. You have this one level of worker who is asked to bail out a level of worker that may very well be making more money than they were through their working life. It just doesn't seem like the citizens of a jurisdiction, be it Ontario, the United States or Britain, would be very happy about that situation.

We saw the situation where Stelco employees had a problem with their pensions over the past little while; I think that problem began in about 1992-93 or so. It seems to me that the pension plan should have been agreed upon between the company and the workers as to whether or not the funding of that pension plan could have been put off or had a pension contribution holiday. That should have been an agreement between the company and the workers, but somehow the workers and the company got the province of Ontario to agree that Stelco was too big to fail and therefore they could take a tax holiday. The province of Ontario taking that position, I think, also gave them a liability, gave the people of Ontario liability in that area, and I wouldn't like to see, through this act or through this—and I'm not suggesting this act is going to do that, but I would not like to see the government of Ontario get into that situation on a broader scale going forward into the future. I think we should be very, very careful that pension plans that are agreed to by companies and employees should be worked out between those two parties without the province of Ontario taking any liability or responsibility for any shortfalls.

What the province of Ontario should do, as I see it, is set very stringent standards, keeping in mind the new world that we're dealing with, the world of low returns, and no one is sure how far into the future those low returns are going to continue. We'd all like to see a recovery and get back to the kinds of returns that we saw in perhaps the late 1990s, the halcyon days of the late 1990s, or even into the first four or five years of this millennium. We saw nice returns on investments, whereas those have now dried up. We don't know how long this is going to continue. I think the government should be very cognizant of the fact that there's going to be a lot of pressure placed on governments when and if these plans don't pan out exactly as they are.

So the regulations that the government puts in place to administer these plans should be very, very conservative—small-c conservative—in nature, and they should be very, very safe going forward because that's something that no government wants to face, as far as being put in the position of charging people without a pension to pay for people who do have a pension. It just seems that that would be a very, very difficult situation for any

government to face, and this bill attempts to do some of that.

It also attempts to create some other opportunities. The contribution holidays, for instance, it does tend to tighten that up in that it—although it expressly permits contribution holidays, unless prohibited under the plan; that would be under the plan that the employees and the employer have agreed upon. Unless it's prohibited under the plan, they may have a contribution holiday, but only if the transfer ratio is below 105%. Again, 105% sounds very conservative, but I would again suggest to the government that what has been conservative in the past may not be conservative in the future. I wonder if 105% is indeed the right number going forward. If we were talking about 15 or 20 years—as Japan has seen—of low returns, that 105% may evaporate very quickly and those tax holidays could come back to bite the people in the plan in a very negative way.

It also requires the plans to disclose contribution holidays to members and retirees, and the benefits of the plan as prescribed, and file annual statements with the regulator to confirm eligibility. It's a little eye-opening to see that, in the plan, the contribution holidays must be disclosed to the members. To think, in this day and age of transparency, that a contribution holiday could take place without the members knowing it, is really somewhat worrisome, when that has to be even in the legislation.

They also talk about: to clarify surplus entitlement for the proposals; to require binding arbitration for surplus distribution when entitlement or a sharing agreement cannot be obtained. This is when we have excess funds in the plan, I suppose. The government is seeking comment regarding how much time should be permitted before requiring arbitration and what members' consent should be required for an arbitration, given that we may never get, as in the Nortel situation, 100% agreement from members as to which way the settlement should go. Therefore, the government is seeking comment as to what is required in that area to come up with something that is fair and equitable to all concerned, and whether the arbitration rule ought to apply to existing plan wind-ups. I would suggest that that might be a moot point, given the situation that this province, and indeed the western world's economies, may be looking at in the very near future.

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It also allows ongoing surplus withdrawals, whether as entitlements or as a sharing agreement, provided the remaining surplus is no less than the greater of 25% of windup liabilities or two times the current service costs plus 5% of windup liabilities. Again, those numbers seem generous. However, going forward, given 10 or 15 years of the Japanese experience, I wonder if they're generous enough.

The pension benefits guarantee fund: If a pension plan goes into arrears, this is the fund that makes up the difference from taxpayers' dollars. This is the fund that I have a great deal of difficulty with. I think there's an element of fairness here that is in huge jeopardy with the people of Ontario, particularly as people become more

and more aware of their responsibilities under their pension funds and pension administration.

Again, the riots in France: I'm not saying that I totally understand those riots. I have heard in the news, like everyone else, I suppose, that the retirement age for the public service in France is now 60 years of age, and the government has proposed to move that to 62. For those two years of extra work, or extending your working life for two extra years, there are riots in the streets of every major city in France. I've got to think that there's something else involved. I can't conceive that people would take to the streets because they have extended their working life from age 60 to 62. Even in France, I don't believe they would do that. I think there must be something else in the agreement that we're not hearing about. But be that as it may, it's a small measure of the degree to which people feel concerned for their future. It may be that people feel that is the thin edge of the wedge as to how they may be treated in the future. That being the case, it is again a great example of how deeply people feel about their pensions and how deeply they feel about governments that might change, alter or attempt to change those pensions. I think that's something that the government should take to heart and be very careful about in how they adjust pensions today and in the future and how this bill might affect them.

There are all kinds of other parts of this bill that introduce flexibility to the pension act. It allows for, as I mentioned earlier, the targeted benefit plans. It allows multilateral agreements within pension plans. It introduces—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Could you stop the clock for a minute? I would ask members, if they're going to have a conversation, that they take it out into the lounge. Thank you very much.

The speaker may continue.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I warned the members earlier that this was a dry subject, and I did tell you that Oprah was on. So if you want to go out in the lobby, I know you can change the channel out there. You can probably get Oprah. It's her last season, so you don't want to miss that.

Where was I? Oh, yes: There are lots of other introductions of different types of options in the pension agreements, such as multi-layered agreements and targeted benefit plans. Again, I would urge caution on behalf of the government. These can be positive attributes, positive things to add to a pension plan; however, they can also increase the difficulty that people might have with their pension plans in the future.

I look forward to the rest of the debate on this subject. I look forward also to hearings on this subject, because I think we need a lot of input—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member for Halton for his submission. Hopefully, we can crank it up a notch and make it a little more exciting so you don't have to watch Oprah.

This is probably the most important thing that has happened in Ontario in many, many years, and I'm a little disappointed, to say the least, that we are talking about this on election day. To me, that's a diversion. To me, they didn't want to have a lot of people watching this today, because there are some good things in this but there are a lot of things missing. In the next 45 minutes to an hour, I'll point out what's wrong with this bill. I'll also have some wonderful facts that may not have been presented before and may be of interest to members so they don't have to run out and watch Oprah.

The member from Halton says he is concerned that the people who don't have pension plans have to donate to the PBGF. I understand his concern. But the NDP brought forth the Ontario pension plan, which would have addressed the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan, so they could be part of the process. What the member doesn't realize is that those people who are in defined pension plans, if they're not honoured and they lose part of their pension plan, they could become a social problem. They could be on social assistance when they're 80 or 84 years old because their pension plans failed. Then what is the government going to do? They're going to have to support everybody. I don't think they've got enough money to do that. They claim they don't even have enough money to do what they're doing now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond to the member from Halton's comments and the comments with respect to Bill 120.

Maybe this is a little dry. Pensions tend to be a little bit dry, and it's a challenge to make them exciting. I know that from Bill 236, and I appreciate the work of the parliamentary assistant, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, who has taken on the challenge of seeing this legislation through this process.

These are important discussions we're having; I think everyone is acknowledging that. It's important to those who are currently in the workplace, those who have pensions and want to see those pensions protected. It's important because of the economic climate we've been in, in the past couple of years, whether it's the General Motors of the world or, more currently, the Nortels of the world.

The government generally has taken a far more active interest in a file that went untouched for more than two decades. The first time it was really touched was Bill 236, and this is the second part of that process now. But it's the likes of economic upheavals that occur in the automotive industry, as an example, that are so critical to this province, or in the technology sector in the case of Nortel, that drive us to pay attention to pension issues broadly and retirement income adequacy.

I think that if you pay close attention to the minister in his comments, you'll see as much, in my view, the discussion being around what role government plays, in addition to the private sector and the individual, in ensuring a level of retirement income adequacy. Pensions

can be a part of that; they're not the whole picture. But certainly this builds on the earlier bill. It builds on the multiple recommendations of the Harry Arthurs commission—this goes a long way to bringing a lot of those into play. It's not doing the whole job, but it's doing most of it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Halton's remarks. He mentioned many things, such as the impacts of the economy in Japan in 15 years and what has taken place, and about how Ontario is the only non-national jurisdiction that provided guarantees and what takes place in low-return situations and how the plan pans out when the payouts and the funds aren't there.

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I've personally done quite a bit of research on an Ontario pension plan. There are so many aspects that need to be discussed in moving forward with anything regarding a potential one. For example, what happens if a person lives in Ontario but works outside the province? Do they contribute or do they not contribute towards a provincial fund? In that situation, does the employer contribute as well as the employee? What happens if a person lives outside of Ontario and works in Ontario?

There are so many different aspects, and quite frankly I believe that pensions are a topic of concern to a lot of individuals. As they move forward and closer to retirement age, they start to look and say, "What have I got now and what am I going to do in these situations?"

Quite frankly, Ontario, once upon a time, had a huge advantage in the employment sector with the Workers' Compensation Board when it was established over 100 years ago in the impacts and how that was able to draw employment into the province of Ontario. The same with OHIP. When OHIP came into being in Ontario, we had another competitive advantage. I believe that pensions may offer that same opportunity for employers in the province of Ontario, if it's handled right.

I look forward to our caucus actually discussing this tomorrow to find out how we're going to position ourselves on this, as we have not. I look forward to more debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

The member from Halton has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: In my last two minutes, I'd just out point that I think it's very incumbent on the government, when they are setting rules around pension plans, to be as careful and prudent as they can to ensure that pension plans are indeed protected and that they will indeed deliver what employees are expecting. After all, we're dealing with setting rules around other people's money. When you're dealing with other people's money, I suggest that it's incumbent on all public figures to be as cautious and as concerned about it, even more so than when dealing with their own money. Personally, I would

take chances with my own money that I would never take when administering someone else's funds.

That being said, it's an issue that I think all governments have wrestled with from time to time. When we do, we should be very prudent and treat this with the utmost seriousness, which I tend to sense from the discussions in the House today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into the details of my presentation, I'd just like to make a few comments. Over the last year and a half, approximately, the Minister of Finance has gotten up in this House and avoided our Ontario pension plan, avoided some of our submissions on it. He seems to want to go with CPP enhancements. He is betting the house on CPP enhancements. He attended a meeting out west, he attended one in PEI and I believe he's attending another one on pensions.

An interesting article came out today in the *Globe and Mail*. CPP reform "won't be easy," Flaherty says. "The federal government is having a difficult time negotiating changes to the Canada pension plan with the provinces that would mean higher premiums for Canadians but also increased benefits. Alberta, for example, is opposed to any increases and feels a private sector option is preferable."

He also "played down expectations of a wide-ranging deal on pension reform this fall, acknowledging he's not sure Ottawa has the support of enough provinces to move ahead with changes to CPP."

"This is not something that will happen quickly," he said....

"Reforming CPP requires the support of two thirds of the provinces representing two thirds of Canada's population."

At last count, Ontario represents over a third of Canadians: quite an influence, I would say, at the table for Mr. Duncan.

"Alberta Finance Minister Ted Morton supports"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask that the member refer to the member's position or riding.

Mr. Paul Miller: A little picky, but okay: finance minister.

"Alberta finance minister Ted Morton supports this private sector option, but remains strongly opposed to enhancing the ... CPP.... Mr. Flaherty suggested things are moving more quickly toward a joint plan to improve financial literacy among Canadians through education." I'm not quite sure how that helps pensioners. I'm not quite sure how that puts money into the pockets of workers who have been ripped off. He's going to educate them; I guess they'll be smarter so they'll know they've been ripped off. That's good.

"And there are those who continue to argue that 'don't fix what isn't broken'—what isn't broken? Well, you might want to tell some of my former members in Hamilton who are in jeopardy, or Nortel workers, or Abitibi-Bowater, or all the ones who have lost 30% to 40% of their pensions. It's not broken? It's smashed.

"And that we should ... focus our attention fully on the 'private pension innovation' path"—another bad mistake. I don't remember too many insurance companies volunteering to give me any rebates on my payments or any money coming back to me from insurance companies. I don't recall that.

But the thing that bothers me the most is that the finance minister is diverting attention, because he's responsible for over 70% of the pension plans in this province, by blaming the CPP. He even convinced the CLC to go on board to increase CPP. Well, this article today doesn't give me a warm feeling that the government's going to move, if at all—or very little—on CPP enhancements, but that was what he based his whole argument on for the last 18 months: that CPP is the way to go.

We said, the NDP, that we should supplement the CPP and old age security with an Ontario pension plan for the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan. Speaker, I don't know about you and what you deal with, but I certainly deal with elderly people in my riding and CPP, if they worked enough in their lives to receive any, plus old age security doesn't cut it. Some of them are getting \$100 for CPP and \$500 for old age security. That's \$600 a month. Their spouse is dead, they have no other visible income and they've gone through their savings. They have to sell their house, move into a one-bedroom apartment and eat peanut butter, if they're lucky. That's not what I'd call protecting the elderly people of this country and province.

Now, into the meat of the discussion. Harry Arthurs came up with a number of good suggestions regarding strengthening the existing pension system. Unfortunately, a number of his most important recommendations are nowhere—I repeat, nowhere—to be seen in this legislation. Here are three that absolutely should have been in the package that aren't.

Firstly, at only \$1,000, the level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the pension benefits guarantee fund is completely inadequate. We believe that over time, the monthly guarantee covered by the PBGF "should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500"—this comes from Mr. Arthurs, who was appointed by the Liberal government to study pensions—"to reflect the effect of inflation on the original maximum of \$1,000," which has been in place since 1980: 30 years ago. My goodness. It's the same as it used to be.

While the NDP agrees that the basis on which the levy would be paid by the plan sponsors is certainly a complex matter and that a phase-in period would absolutely be necessary, we're extremely disappointed that the key Arthurs recommendation is nowhere to be seen in the first package of pension reform legislation.

The government likes to talk about the fact that just to allow for solvency under the present \$1,000-a-month limit, the premium had to be raised 500%. What they don't make clear is that the 500%, in real terms, is an increase from \$1 per plan member per year to \$5 per plan member per year. Only \$5 per year; not a lot of money.

Also, the minister says that to implement the full Arthurs recommendation of \$2,500 a month would mean a 1,000% increase. That only means \$10 per member per year, particularly if it was phased in. We in the NDP simply do not think that this is too much to ask if it means guaranteeing the pensions of Ontarians. If the way to prevent future Nortel disasters is to phase in an increase of \$5 per year per member over the new rates, the government should just do it.

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Secondly, the NDP supports the Arthurs recommendation for establishing an Ontario pension agency. We believe that pooling, administering, investing and disbursing stranded pensions would be an important role for this agency to oversee. In our opinion, an Ontario pension agency would pretty much solve the problem that Nortel pensioners face—and AbitibiBowater, Canwest Global etc., etc. All could benefit from an Ontario pension agency. The government seems to think that the pension agency, as conceived by the Arthurs report, runs the risk of making the government responsible for any downside potential involved in managing pension assets. That's simply not the case. And if that's not the case, you have to wonder why the government won't pursue this very solid idea.

Finally, Arthurs recommended the adoption of an emergency indexation provision; in the event of another surge in inflation, fixed pension benefits will, we know, be inadequate. At the same time, inflation may deliver high nominal returns to pension funds. High nominal returns due to inflation should not be permitted to produce high surpluses at the expense of fixed-income pensioners. Now is the time to address this concern with limited indexing provisions before inflation has become a serious issue. We very much think the government should act on this now.

To give the government some credit, there are a number of solid provisions in the legislation. Most of the constructive proposals follow closely the recommendations of Professor Arthurs. It's too bad that by ignoring three of the most important recommendations, the government threw away the opportunity to pass some really landmark pension legislation here.

I want to talk about the specific provisions in the legislation. It's pretty technical stuff, and I look forward to going clause by clause through the bill at committee, but here are some of the NDP's initial thoughts on it.

Funding: Firstly, on the funding front, in broad strokes, we think the government is on the right track because they are basically following Arthurs's recommendations. We were pleased to see that Ontario's legislation will, in the future, treat different types of pension plans differently in regard to funding.

In general, pension plans that are jointly sponsored and governed by a board that is independent of the employer, at least half of whose members are appointed by trade unions, will be treated differently than pension plans that are sponsored and governed only by an employer. We applaud this step, and we believe that it

marks an important transition to a more stable employment-based pension system in our province. At the same time, we do have specific concerns in regard to the proposed funding rules for general application as well as those that are applicable specifically to multi-employer plans.

Plan improvements: With respect to the section on plan improvements, we note that the government proposes to limit the ability to improve plan benefits by requiring that any improvements be funded more quickly than is now the case. In particular, the government proposes eight-year, going-concern funding for benefit improvements in normal course, and where a plan's funded ratio is 85% or less, an immediate lump sum payment followed by a five-year amortization period. While these rules have merit in cases where the cost of the improvement is large in comparison to the underlying sponsor's payroll or financial capacity, these rules are unnecessary in other cases and many, indeed, unduly restrict the ability of a plan to provide decent pension benefits to its members.

Contribution holidays: We also note that the government's stated intention to require disclosure of contribution holidays is a very positive step toward stable funding. As you know, there have been a number of documented cases in which lengthy periods of time on contribution holidays have been followed by severe—I repeat, severe—underfunding. On balance, employment-based pension plans would be in a much better position today if contribution holidays had been prohibited in early years.

In the absence of an outright prohibition on contribution holidays, it is very important that members and retirees understand the long-term consequences of contribution holidays for their plans, and that the disclosure of contribution holidays and their potential long-term implications be very explicit.

MEPPs are multiple-employer plans. Target benefit MEPPs are one of the important success stories of the employment-based pension world. While they have been buffeted by the financial crisis, as have all plans, the incidence of windups in MEPP sectors has been very low and coverage levels have been maintained or increased.

I'll give you an example of a defined pension plan in Ontario. It's called HOOPP, which is the hospital workers' plan. Even through the downturn and the recession, they were over 95% funded because they had excellent accountants, excellent actuaries and solid, not-so-risky investments. HOOPP is probably the poster child for pension plans. It's an excellent plan. When people say that defined pension plans are a way of the past, that's nonsense. They can work if you've got the right people running them.

While we agree with the policy thrust that underlines proposed reforms to MEPPs, we do have concerns over some of the language used in describing their implementation. For example, we agree that jointly sponsored multi-employer target benefit plans should be exempt from solvency funding. On the other hand, the proposed

legislation would apparently restrict eligibility for this exemption to MEPPs, all of whose members are employed in jurisdictions that also offer permanent solvency funding exemptions. Unfortunately, no other jurisdiction in Canada is currently proposing permanent solvency reliefs for MEPPs. This means that any MEPP with members in more than one jurisdiction, which is quite common, will not be able to secure solvency funding relief. This is not a desirable outcome and is in many ways worse than the current provisions of the PBA, which provide temporary relief to eligible MEPPs whether they are multi-jurisdictional or not.

The NDP supports the extension of solvency funding relief to MEPPs with for-profit and not-for-profit participating employers. We see no relevant distinction between these types of employers for the purposes of pension funding.

Target benefit plans are proposed to be subject to stricter disclosure requirements. These are quite welcome, as you know. MEPPs have greatly improved their disclosures over the course of the past decade and will continue to do so for the benefit of their plan members. On the other hand, it is also important that other pension arrangements that may directly compete with MEPPs, especially those sponsored by the insurance industry, also be required to make full disclosure as to their costs and risks. Insurance companies don't necessarily like doing that. It's like pulling teeth to get them to disclose. I haven't seen in my lifetime too many insurance companies going under in Canada; in fact, probably none. So certainly, the profits are good.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Confederation Life.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's one.

It would be tragic for the successful MEPPs sector of Ontario's pension industry to be subject to onerous disclosure and risk reporting while inferior products offered by the financial services sector are not required to disclose their costs or the adequacy of the benefits their products may deliver.

Surplus: As you know, it is the NDP's position that all the assets in a pension plan belong to the plan members. If a surplus is to be paid out on termination and from ongoing plans in accordance with the legal entitlement criteria, it is important that current entitlement criteria, as articulated by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Schmidt v. Air Products*, be properly codified. We are not convinced that this legislation does that. We look forward to a closer examination of the surplus provisions at committee level.

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Those are the NDP's initial thoughts on Bill 120. Now I would like to address the issue of providing coverage for the 65% of working Ontarians who lack a workplace pension. First, with only 35% of Ontarians covered by an occupational pension plan, there's a clear need for expanded coverage for pensions for Ontarians. Ideally, the way this would be done would be to significantly increase the benefit levels of the Canada pension plan. This would draw on existing economies of scale, risk-sharing

and administrative efficiencies of the plan. I'll reiterate: Again, ideally, the way to go would be the Canada pension plan. The finance minister has been touting this for a year and a half. What appears in today's article is, as I predicted, that now the federal government and its minister are doing the moonwalk. We're going backwards: "I'm not sure; maybe; I don't know." That kind of blows the tire on the finance minister's car that was rolling along the road down to Ottawa. He seems to have had a couple of blowouts on the way.

He's having another meeting coming up. They're claiming that two thirds of the provinces representing two thirds of the Canadian population have to agree to this. Well, we've got over a third of the population right here in Ontario for the whole country, so that's a nice start. Even if Alberta and, say, Quebec have a problem with that, we could still pass it. I don't know why they're backtracking here. This is another backtrack, and that will give the government a chance to blame the feds. The feds will say, "Well, you guys didn't do anything to help us," and they'll just throw the ball back and forth. And who pays the price? The working people of the province who negotiated their contracts over the years for deferred wages. They also negotiated that when they made the deal, a deal's a deal: "I will do this now, and 30 years from now I'll have a decent retirement so I won't have to go on the dole or on social assistance because I can't afford it."

So what do they do? The government sits by when all these companies pull the rug out from their pension plans and run south, run to other countries. Why is that going on? Because this government and the government in Ottawa eroded our base industries, sold us down the river. We don't own anything in our own country anymore. All the major steel industries, forestry and mining are foreign-owned. How do you expect us to have a decent pension plan? Unbelievable.

Let me be clear: The NDP don't think that merely a modest increase to the CPP benefit is adequate, and I don't even know if that's going to happen. If that means a 10% or 20% increase, it won't cure the problems. That's where we think the McGuinty government is going, and that's not good enough for the two thirds of Ontarians who lack a workplace pension plan.

They talk about the money they stuck into the defined pension plan under the PBGF. That was good. How about the 65% of people, as the opposition pointed out, who don't have a pension plan who are contributing to that and feel left out? We gave them an opportunity to include those people. They wouldn't even talk about it; they wouldn't even deal with it, wouldn't even mention it in this House. Heaven forbid, we don't want to help the 65% of Ontarians who pay in to help the defined pension plans. We don't want to help them; we want to leave them stranded. They want the whole country to carry their burden. "CPP will fix it all." Well, according to this—and there will be more of these coming out—they'll be backtracking for the next year, and when the minister goes to his meeting in the fall or spring, it will

be, "Well, you know, we can't get a consensus and we can't"—you'll hear all the excuses. But they'll promise you everything just before the election next year, and it won't happen.

We urge the McGuinty government to take the message to the next federal finance minister that the two thirds of Canadians who lack a plan need more than just a modest increase to CPP. But they're not taking that message. They're not doing anything for the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan. They're going and saying, "CPP should pay for everybody in the country. We don't want to be involved. We think you should do it," and here are the feds saying, "Sorry." This is page 1 of probably a bunch of them that'll be coming out of backtracking: "Oh, we can't do it and we can't get consensus." This is just the start. There are more coming. Then all the people will say, "What happened?"

The McGuinty government was pushing—sorry.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's okay, "the McGuinty government." The McGuinty government was pushing CPP. The Minister of Finance stood up—and he has done it several times: "We think the answer is in Ottawa." It looks like Mr. Harper and his friends have a different idea after saying it was good. They talk a lot. They have meetings all over the country. But all I know is, the people in Hamilton and the people in my riding are losing their pensions right, left and centre. There's no money coming to them. All they can say is, "We're talking about it and we've changed the rules on governing it." No money going into their pockets. Of course, they'll say, "We lowered your residential taxes. We did this. We gave you a break here, a break there." It doesn't cut it. These are negotiated monies that were taken in place of wage raises over the years. They're deferred wages, and these wages were supposed to go to the people at the end of their working years. They're pulling the rug out, and they're not doing anything to protect them.

I should also add that the Ontario NDP supports an increase to the GIS and reform of Canada's bankruptcy laws so that pension plan members are ranked above creditors in bankruptcy proceedings.

I can remember being in Ottawa fighting the government of the day, which happened to be a Liberal government at the time, to say, "Why don't you move workers up on the list of creditors so that workers would be number one?" A "workers first" bill. Move the workers up before the banks, before the insurance companies, before everything, and let them put liens on the assets of the company so they could pay their pension plan obligations.

This message that's being sent in Canada is pretty scary. They're saying, "You negotiated with me 30 years ago, and I promised you \$2,000 a month when you retire. You keep working for me, keep making me profits. I'll keep putting in," which they don't—too big to fail—and then they get to the end and they say, "Oops. Sorry; the deal's off. You don't get your \$2,000. You might get \$1,000. You might get \$800. You might get nothing." To me, that's robbery. To me, that's illegal. To me, that's

fraudulent. That's theft. That's their money that they're playing with, that they worked hard for, and they deserve it.

That said, the issue of expanding pension coverage is an urgent one. We in the Ontario NDP do not believe that the Harper government, not to mention the Alberta government—and Quebec is not so on this, either—is going to move significantly to expand coverage under the CPP. Therefore, we believe that there's an important role to be played at the provincial level in greatly expanding workplace pension coverage.

We know how we wanted to do that. The NDP's Ontario pension plan wasn't discussed, was ignored by the finance minister, was ignored by that side of the House. They didn't want to talk about it; can't do it. I just showed you some of the numbers, how easy it would be to help. It may not help me at my age; it will certainly help our kids and grandkids so they don't have to be on welfare because they can't afford to retire or they have to work till they're 80 years old.

What's going on in France right now? Look at the riots there. They're upset about, what, two years adding on before you can acquire a pension and other issues? They're worried now, and it's not just the baby boomers and middle-aged people; the students are backing them. The students have clued in that, "Hey, one day I'm going to need some help. One day I'm going to need money to see my elderly years through." Even the kids are starting to get it.

You can talk a good game. You can change a few administration things. You can fix and flex and do these things. It certainly doesn't put money in the pockets of the people who need it most, and that's now. As the baby boomers age and get closer to retirement, it's going to double and triple. We're not ready for it. They're not ready for it in Ottawa, and they're not ready for it in Ontario, because they're not doing what they should be doing. They're not moving ahead.

1710

We know where we stand. It's called the Ontario retirement plan. I don't have any idea where the McGuinty government stands. What we're worried about is that it will cave in Ottawa, and I think there's been some indication that they've already caved to the insurance lobby here. I think there's a private member's bill that got brought forward to make insurance companies control pension plans. That's a scary thing.

The Ontario retirement plan: The NDP believes that Ontario should move ahead with other provinces and develop a publicly run, supplemental, employment-based pension plan for all working Ontarians who presently lack occupational coverage.

Now, the opposition member got up and said, "I'm concerned about who is going to pay it if I move out of the province." We don't expect an employer to pay for somebody who moves out of the province, because they don't work for that employer, unless they're still working for that employer in another province; certainly they should continue to pay their pension. But if they decide

to leave this province and move, they'll be entitled to what they earned in their pension plan and it could be transferred to the other province and into their plan. So you don't lose a dime; you don't miss a tick on the clock. It follows you where you go. The Canada pension plan follows you where you go. Why can't an Ontario pension plan or a Quebec or Manitoba pension plan? Why can't it follow you? I don't see any reason.

First, and most obviously, the Ontario retirement plan would provide a modest retirement benefit to the roughly 65% of Ontarians who presently have no workplace-based pension coverage.

Secondly, in the Ontario retirement plan the band of income that the contribution rate would be assessed against would be different from that of the current CPP. A broader band of income that the contribution would be based on would allow for a higher benefit for plan members earning over \$47,000, the current CPP upper limit. We believe that an upper limit in the range of \$65,000 to \$70,000 makes sense. This responds to exactly the kind of middle-income replacement rate issues that pension expert Bob Baldwin identified in his report to the finance minister, which was tabled in Whitehorse in December.

Thirdly, an Ontario retirement plan could be used to further the consolidation of a fragmented workplace-based pension system. For example, Ontario has over 6,500 workplace plans, many of them very small. Many might elect to integrate into a large Ontario plan that has as its base two thirds of the workforce. Bigger is better in this case.

Fourthly, an Ontario retirement plan would allow for the transfer of RRSPs, which could be used to purchase past service credits for the basic benefit. This means that if you are 45 years old and your pension plan is in jeopardy, you can transfer your RRSPs, which are separate from a pension plan, into the Ontario pension plan to buy credits to give you a fixed amount of money when you retire so you don't miss a beat. This would allow older workers who would not ordinarily be able to earn the full benefit to receive more than they would otherwise.

Here is how it would work. An Ontario retirement plan would be a publicly run targeted defined benefit plan much like the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Pension Plan.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Members might want to listen to this. This is good stuff. A lot of sidebars here.

In order to maximize participation, every employee not enrolled in a workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the ORP. But the plan is not mandatory. If you have a better way to plan for your retirement, you don't have to take part in the Ontario retirement plan. And if, after opting out—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Just stop the clock for a minute. I've said it before this afternoon:

If members would like to have private conversations, they should take them into the lounge. Thank you.

The member should continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: Come on, Ted. I listened to you yesterday.

And after opting out—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You're up against Dr. Phil.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, I know—you decide that the Ontario retirement plan turns out to be something you can use, you can opt back in. Employees and employers would be expected to contribute equally to the new plan and a minimum contribution rate would be established. Contribution rates for employees and employers should be phased in over a five-year period, and depending on economic circumstances, a somewhat longer phase-in might be considered for small business employers.

Unlike a defined contribution plan or a group RRSP, the assets of the plan would be invested for the plan as a whole and not on an individual basis. This results in far more security for plan members.

The maximum benefit of the plan would likely be between \$650 and \$700 a month in 2010 dollars. It certainly would help. It certainly might pay that crazy hydro bill or put some food on the table and help you out with your monthly situation on a fixed income. That \$700 or \$800 a month can make a big difference in a person's life, like whether they can stay in their home or be forced into a one-bedroom apartment.

It's a big difference for elderly people. It's quite a serious situation to be forced out of your house when you're elderly, out of your comfort zone, because of economic conditions or because of a lack of pension plans or lack of an income; that you're forced into a situation that we certainly wouldn't want to see our parents in, but it happens every day in every city in this province.

Like I said before, 20% of the people in my riding live below the poverty level, so you can imagine how many elderly people come into my office upset. They can't pay their hydro bill. They can't pay their monthly bills on utilities, because with their meagre old age security and whatever they've gone through in their money and their small CPP, if they worked, they can't even buy food. It's pretty scary.

Because many current members of the workforce would not have sufficient years in the plan to receive the maximum benefit, plan members would be able to increase their normal benefit through a retroactive purchase of past service credits. It could make a big difference at the end of the day, and if you're in your mid-40s and your pension plan's in trouble and you're not overly confident that the Ottawa government or the provincial government is going to help you out, it might be good that you could buy into a plan that was sponsored by a then-government that would assure you a little more money. If you do get CPP—a lot of people don't—plus your old age pension, plus an Ontario pension plan, you might be able to get by. You certainly won't be living high off the hog, but you can certainly get by, maybe,

and you wouldn't be forced out of your house. Because I don't think any member in this chamber could live on \$1,500 a month. They can't, and I challenge them to try it.

I wanted to try it. I went on a diet with several of my members, a food bank diet. By the third day I'd run out of food, and the food I got was not exactly nutritious. Day four and day five, I'd be starved or I'd be out standing on a corner trying to get money to buy a hamburger or a hot dog. A lot of people are living like that in our province, but not one member in this House has ever had to do that. You've got to live it to do it.

We challenged them. We challenged the official opposition to do it, and no takers. Five NDPers did it. Interesting. They say they're for the people, they're for the working people, they're for the people of Ontario; well, take a ride on the Reading. Do what they've got to do for a week. You might have a change of thought. You might have a change of heart. You might try to do something for the people in this province who are suffering.

We believe that the Ontario retirement plan would be an extraordinarily cost-efficient vehicle for retirement savings. This is why we would keep all investment management activities in the public sector, either by farming these activities out to an existing large-scale public plan or by putting together a consortium of such plans.

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I don't want the private industry running my pension plan. I don't want it. I just don't feel comfortable with it. I want to know that I can trust my government. I want them to know that I'm going to get the plan at the end of the day. I know the cheque is going to be in the mail. I don't want fast-talking investors taking my pension plan—from the private sector—and investing in things that are losing, filling their own pockets, and at the end of the day, Paul is out of luck. That's happened; happens all the time.

We think the Ontario retirement plan is the most cost-effective, practical plan that could be out there to protect every Ontarian, but clearly, unfortunately, the Ontario retirement plan proposal is only one proposal amongst many being discussed at the present time. There are tens of billions of dollars annually in new retirement savings that would be triggered by a new comprehensive retirement saving regime, and the banks and insurance companies don't want to lose those management fees. They want a piece of the action; they certainly want to get us again. There are members who favour insurance companies. Therefore, they are becoming increasingly aggressive in pushing their preferred options.

I'd like to talk a bit now about why these options should be rejected. Using 2007 Statistics Canada estimates for an accumulated retirement savings, it is estimated Canadians are spending almost \$15.6 billion per year, or 9% of retirement savings, to have their retirement savings managed; \$15.6 billion to manage it.

How did we make out? Take a look at the world recession. Take a look at the investments some of these

guys made; pretty risky, some of them. I'd say most people in this room probably lost between 20% and 40% of their investments and they blame it on globalization. I blame it on bad money managers. I blame it on bad investments. But not one of those managers lost his paycheque. In fact, I think they got a piece of the action, too. I think they got a bit of it because I know every year they get a bit of the action. They get a few shares off each one of your funds they manage, and it doesn't go down; it goes up. They don't take a loss. When we take a loss, they still take their management fees.

I haven't recovered yet. In six years, seven years I still haven't recovered. I'm down. I thought you were supposed to take money and invest it to make money; at the end of the day they take their little share, that they're doing a good job, that you're making money. But when you lose money, they still take their money. They don't take a hit like you do. Maybe some of those rules should change, too. If you don't perform and the fund doesn't make money, you don't get paid. Well, that wouldn't happen. That won't happen.

Some \$15.6 billion; my goodness, we could feed a lot of people with that. We could probably save a few jobs. We might even encourage a few companies to come to Ontario; \$15.6 billion, I can't believe that. The bulk of this is spent for retail management fees of various sorts levied by banks, insurance companies and their wholly owned mutual funds. Get that: The fox is watching the henhouse. Let me repeat that: Banks, insurance companies and their wholly owned mutual funds. Wow. You control what comes in, you control what goes out, and you still get your money—that's interesting—even if things are bad.

What if the millions of retail channel savers could pay wholesale rates essentially provided by the public pension funds? If contributors were paying the wholesale administration costs offered by these larger public pension funds, their fees would decline—get this—under public pension funds, by \$8.4 billion a year. Wow. That's interesting. Their retirement savings would grow by an additional \$8.4 billion per year. Stated still differently, the resulting 1.2% reduction in annual cost is equivalent to a 24% boost in the ultimate pension the retirement savings can purchase.

This raises the important question of why all retirement savers should not have the opportunity to pay wholesale fees. Addressing it requires recognizing the financial services industry is the beneficiary of the current annual \$11.2-billion retail channel cash flow which calculations show could fall by \$8.4 billion to \$2.8 billion with wholesale pricing. The financial services industry argues that surveys show their clients are satisfied with the current arrangements. Well, I'm not, for one. I'm not happy with my broker. I'm not happy with the investments that are going on. He's in an industry where he has to struggle with all the other money managers. I don't think he's doing it to me personally. If you put money in, after six or seven years you expect to have more than you put in, but it's not happening

It's unavoidable costs; daily valuation and liquidity goes on all the time. More importantly, the money buys their clients valuable advice and almost unlimited choice.

Valuable advice: It doesn't take a rocket scientist to read a profit-and-loss statement or a stock portfolio. How did that stock perform? How is it going to perform? I think more people should learn more about this and manage their own portfolio, because somebody's making an awful lot of money on the backs of us.

In response, we in the NDP question why long-term retirement savers should have to pay for services they do not need: daily valuations and liquidity. The "valuable advice" argument would be more persuasive if there was evidence that this advice is actually producing higher risk-adjusted returns for clients. In fact, the evidence points the other way. Studies in Canada, the United States and Australia have confirmed what theory predicts: the higher the average costs of investing, the lower average net returns. Finally, behavioural studies confirm what common sense tells us: Retail investors have far too much choice. In fact, most do not want to choose at all.

So from a design perspective, the question is clear: How can we best help millions of Canadian retirement savers who want adequate pensions at affordable savings rates but who don't want to get mired in the complexities of investing?

We in the NDP say the answer is obvious: a large, public, multi-employer benefit plan like our proposed Ontario retirement plan.

But we're afraid, very afraid, that where the McGuinty government is going is something like the private member's bill tabled by the member from Peterborough, who is favouring insurance companies to administer pension plans—a scary proposition. No, thank you. Insurance companies have made enough off me in the last 50 years. No, thank you.

Defined pension plans are signed agreements between working people and their employer, some of them 30 and 40 years ago. Several contracts: Every three, four years, they sign a contract. The employer agrees to make contributions to the employees' pension plan in lieu of financial raises or other benefits. The union, or the government working union, signs on the dotted line. They will continue to work, continue to make profits or whatever they do for that employer, continue to work under his regime, his rules, to better his lifestyle, better his situation. All they ask in return is, "Give me what you promised to give me for all these years of dedicated service, all these years that my family now have to rely on me, when I'm 65 or 70, to provide for them or help them or whatever I'm doing"—a whole lifetime of working, paying the taxes, doing what the system tells you to do, honouring your end of the bargain.

What do these employers do, some of them? "Sorry; we made bad investments in the market. Sorry; we're liquidating. Sorry; we don't have the money to put in your pension plan for the next 10 years like we promised. Sorry; you're going to get 30% or 40% of what you were entitled to." That's wonderful. You're 65 years old, ready

to retire, and you're going to get 30% of what you're entitled to.

I guess they broke their promise. I guess they broke a contract. Let's talk about contract law. Let's talk about what they were supposed to do. The employee lived up to his end of it and the employer didn't. What is this government doing to stamp on the employers who aren't living up to their obligations? Under the present rules, they allow them to make investments in—to use some of the money in the pension plan for whatever; surpluses, for use wherever they want. They shouldn't be allowed to use surpluses in bad times because that makes it worse if the bad times get even worse, and they allow them to do it.

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The rules have to change. Certainly, they've made some administrative changes. I guess through pressure, media attention and the opposition hammering them every day, they finally had to move on pensions. But they moved an itty-bitty little bit for administration. They did nothing to put money back in the pockets of the people who negotiated their contracts with these companies and these employers in good faith—good faith bargaining: "I did my job. You made your profits. You bought your little resort in the Bahamas. We did that to help you do that. And now I'm asking for \$2,000 or \$1,500 so I don't have to get booted out of my house, so I can put food on the table for my wife and I and whoever else I'm helping out, because a lot of our kids can't get jobs."

A lot of kids are staying at home a lot longer. Have you noticed? Some aren't leaving until they're 35 because they haven't got the wherewithal to have their own apartment and their own car. They can't afford to leave home, and they can't afford to get married, unless you have four people working in the house to pay the bill. I don't know how these people can afford to live in Toronto. I know the people in my community can't pay \$2,500, \$3,000 in rent a month. Where are people getting the money? Our society is in debt. Those plastic cards that came out many years ago have put a lot of people behind the eight ball, and they continue to do so.

Our kids, most of them, unless they come from a wealthy background, are living on credit. If one of them gets sick, they lose the house. I go down the street and I see people who are 35 years old—or 32, even younger—with two brand new cars in the driveway and a \$350,000 house with no furniture. They're living in a shell. Not one of them can get sick. If they miss a week's work, the bank is knocking on the door: "You missed your mortgage payment," or "You missed your payments."

This government has to get a handle on this. They have to get a handle on pensions. They have to get a handle on our economy. They have to produce more jobs. We're on a downslide, and they stand up, day in and day out—I get a headache. I hear, "We've created 600,000 jobs, 50,000 green venture jobs." Where? It certainly isn't in my community. There were 27,000 jobs lost last month. In fact, Siemens, one of the last major employers in Hamilton, next to Dofasco and Stelco, is leaving.

I could go through a list of 70 to 80 major companies that have left Hamilton in the last 20 years. Some 47,000 manufacturing jobs have left our city. I haven't seen—600,000? I haven't seen 2,000 come to the city. They've sunk some money into the medical end of it, and that's good for medical research, but that doesn't give John the truck driver, Bill the forklift driver and Joe the barber any money. It gives to some bureaucrats, some administrators, some researchers and some doctors, yes, but they're at the high end. They're making good money. How about all the people in the middle? How about the people below that? No answers.

The desperation in my community is getting worse by the week, and they stand up and say, "Everything's okay. Everything's fine. It's getting better." Nonsense. It's not getting better; it's getting worse by the day. More people are unemployed, more people are—our food banks are empty. People can't even afford to give to the food banks. The three major food banks in Hamilton are almost empty. That certainly isn't a sign of good times. That certainly isn't a sign of protecting people's jobs, their pensions, their economy.

As I said before and as I've said for 10 years, in Ottawa and Ontario there has been an erosion of our base industries. We don't own anything anymore. Our three major steel companies—Algoma, Stelco, Dofasco—are foreign-owned. They were formerly Canadian-owned.

Ninety-two per cent of our forestry—you wonder why all the places are closing in northern Ontario—are foreign-owned; 90% of our mining. If you don't own your mining, don't own your forestry—next, it will be our water—and you don't own our manufacturing, you wonder why there's a pension crisis? You wonder why people are leaving Ontario? You wonder why people are leaving this country with their firms? They don't want to pay Paul the welder \$45 an hour. They want to pay him \$4 an hour in Mexico. And we allow it to happen.

We are creating a welfare state. That's what we're creating in Ontario. And it's not just this government; it's other governments too. I'm not going to put the whole blame on them. It has been going on for 20 years. You can't see the forest for the trees. That's what's going on, and we have done it to ourselves. We've done it to our kids and we've done it to our grandkids.

With the—how would I put it?—the grey area of, "Things are going to get better; foreign investment is good, globalization"—I hear the Premier stand up all the time: "We're in a global market." Well, how are we making out? Most of the people in my city are unemployed. The government brags about the 140,000 jobs they created. They sure did—10 or 11 bucks an hour, 14 bucks an hour in service industries, most of them, and some small factories. The \$30- and \$35-an-hour jobs are gone for good.

Don't tell me things are good. Don't tell me you've created 600,000 jobs. Don't tell me there are 50,000 green venture jobs. Nonsense. Is that why you signed a contract with Samsung? That's certainly not going to get my people jobs. It might help them; it's not going to help my people.

Here we are: pensions. Pensions come from good-paying jobs. We've got a government—let's take Siemens in Hamilton. We have 400 to 500 workers who are now not going to have a job. We've got the factories; we've got the infrastructure; we've got the employment; we've got the skill sets; we've got tradespeople sitting at home twiddling their thumbs who could pass on knowledge to our young people for trades, and that company is going to close and leave because of high hydro costs, because they want cheap labour in another country. They want to build it cheaper in the States or Quebec or wherever they come from, and we're out of luck.

When I used to drive to work on Burlington Street in Hamilton for over 30 years, some days I had trouble getting a parking spot. You could fire a cannon off on Burlington Street and not hit anybody right now. Talk about brownfields. Holy mackerel. Brownfields? I've got hundreds of factories in trouble. Nobody there. Lots of parking spaces; I can park anywhere I want. I can park in the former CEO's spot because he's gone too.

We'd better smarten up because, I'll tell you, if we don't fix these pensions and we don't start bringing jobs to Ontario, we are going to be a social welfare state, relying on our friends from the south to bail us out, or England or somewhere else. There is still hope; there's still an opportunity to change it and protect people's pensions, but we certainly aren't going to do it by throwing the ball back and forth from Ottawa to Toronto: "Oh, you fix it." "No, you fix it." "No." "CPP: We'll raise it." Don't hold your breath. Maybe, after push comes to shove, they might get a 2% or 3% raise, which might be 10 or 12 bucks a month. It certainly isn't going to change anybody's life in my community or anyone else's community.

We've got to get with it. We've got to make substantial, meaty changes, not half-assed efforts.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Is that parliamentary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Half-assed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to withdraw that last comment as unparliamentary.

Mr. Paul Miller: All right. I will remove the second part of it.

It's brutal. It's absolutely brutal what's going on. All they care about—they sit there for an hour and a half and don't say anything. Because I said a word that wasn't quite protocol—not a word about pensions; not a word about changing the economy; all they're worried about is that I said one little thing wrong. Pretty pathetic.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Pathetic. Do you know what, Speaker? I've seen this so many times over the last three years that it's beyond comprehension. It's beyond trying to understand. Everyone's walking around with a bag on their head. They don't get it. You don't get what's going on out there.

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Come to Hamilton. I'll be glad to show you a tour of my area. People can't afford to eat, can't pay their hydro.

I've got single mothers coming into my office with nowhere to go because this government's creating 600,000 jobs and 50,000 green venture jobs, and they're going to do all this. Trust me, public, it's all double talk. It's not happening. They don't want to fix your pension plan. They're blaming the feds. The feds blame them. Nothing's getting done. It's all tinkering.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What's your plan, Paul? Tell us about your plan.

Mr. Paul Miller: I did. You weren't listening. I talked about the Ontario plan.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would remind the member to speak through the Chair. Minister of Transportation, please speak to the Chair.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd be happy to show you our plan. Maybe they don't understand it; I don't know. Or maybe they don't want to touch it with a 10-foot pole; I don't know.

You know what? I could go on and on about the waste of money in this province. I said this morning—they showed the electronic cards they wanted to create. Five years to create the card; they spent \$388 million dollars in five years for hardware, software, programs, how they want to do it—\$388 million. Over \$200 million went to consultants. Almost 48% of the budget went to consultants. That's one ministry—one ministry. Twenty-two ministries—if I added it up over the 22 ministries—and that's not counting the other 300 agencies and commissions that this government oversees—I think I'd be fair to say it's in the billions that they've wasted.

I'll tell you what I could do with a couple of billion dollars in Hamilton. I could put a lot of people to work, feed all the poor, help create some kind of activity marketing-wise. We could do a lot with that money. They waste billions every year, and if people could actually understand what's going on here and really could see what's happening, they would be shocked. I keep raising the alarm bells. I keep telling them, "Waste, waste, waste." They don't believe it. Well, what can I say? Hopefully one day when we're all having problems paying our bills, when most of us are unemployed in this country because of the way it's going—the only thing we have good about us is that we have some good natural resources that could still save us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have been listening for the past 60 minutes to a very heartwarming rendition of Bill 120, but with all due respect to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, in all of his 60 minutes I haven't heard that he's saying that he's supporting the workings, the content of Bill 120. I wish he would have said something with respect to that.

In answer to that, I have to say that the bill comes forth from the action of the government. It is the government that has to recognize the existing situation that we are in thanks to the economic situation of the last few years. The government has recognized the need to make some immediate improvements, some changes, to the

pension system, and here we are today. If it wasn't for the economic situation of the last few years, I can tell the House that we wouldn't be here today discussing this particular bill.

The member said a couple of things right—I agree with some of the others. One is that it's not the fault of this government. Was it perhaps the previous one or the previous one? We went over 20 years, over two decades, where nothing has been done. But I have to say, and I think it would be very nice if they recognized it from the other side, that this government has recognized the need, given the particular situation, to act and bring some long-term stability to the system for the employer, workers, retirees and pensioners that we all care for.

I can hear the passion with which the member is talking about that, but it's also very passionate to speak about "Let's support the government that is willing, wanting to do something," and that is why we have this piece of legislation here today. We all know that unless something is done, the future will remain uncertain, and it will not be sustainable any longer for our employers, employees and the government at large. So I hope that we'll all support Bill 120.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I listened to the contribution this afternoon by the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek to Bill 120. It was an interesting speech, and he spoke at some length—for an hour, I believe. I thought he outlined his particular ideas and concerns, obviously, in a very effective way, as he always does.

I had the chance to visit Hamilton on October 3 to actually tour the HMCS Haida, which is a Canadian destroyer that is now there as a tourist attraction for all to see. I was obviously very troubled by the economic situation in Hamilton. I think the member is quite right to bring forward the concerns of his constituents with respect to the economy and jobs. He focused on the fact that if we don't have good jobs, how can we save for our retirement, whether it's through our RRSPs, through pensions or even through the CPP?

It's interesting that there is an article in today's *Globe and Mail* concerning the CPP reform. It indicates that the Minister of Finance for Canada, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, is working with the other Ministers of Finance towards trying to see if there is a consensus around enhancements to the CPP. It would appear that there isn't unanimity, but significant reform of CPP apparently, from what I'm told, requires the support of two thirds of the provinces representing two thirds of Canada's population.

Clearly, in my riding certainly, there are many thousands of families who are facing the future with a great deal of anxiety, because they would like to be able to save more for their retirement. The cost of living and high taxes make it more difficult for them to do so. Those who are lucky enough to have a pension, and ideally a defined benefit pension, are very, very fortunate and privileged. Some of us don't have that, of course. As we know in this Legislature, we have a defined contribution

plan. But at the same time, I think it is incumbent upon the government to bring forward modern pension legislation that enhances retirement security for Ontarians, and I would encourage them to do so.

I hope that Bill 120 will go to committee so that we can discuss this issue further.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a couple of minutes to respond to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek during the hour that he had available as the leadoff.

With the number of members in the House who were paying very close attention to what the member said, I must say I was disappointed that as he was closing off his remarks, he was in some way trying to suggest that those of us here today, taking the time to listen carefully, somehow weren't engaged in what he was saying. I would suggest we were. I'm saddened by the rendition he has for his riding and for what he sees happening in Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. We probably have members on this side who will view their community a little bit differently, and I look forward to them having the opportunity on another bill to speak to the exciting and important growth opportunities that are occurring in Hamilton and what makes it one of the great cities in this province, one which will yet again find its place among the leading cities as our economy changes.

The bill itself, though—we have to remember what this is about. This is about issues such as strengthening the rules that require more sustainable funding for those benefits that have been promised and stronger funding standards for benefits improvements, so really two things there. You've got to have the rules in place so that those promised benefits are going to be realized. As people finish their work careers, they have expectations. We've seen situations where they're not realized, so we need to strengthen those rules. This legislation will do in part what's necessary.

There are opportunities in the legislation for the funding standards, for benefit improvement. It's not just about maintaining the status quo; it's giving an opportunity to take a look and see, are there ways and measures by which the benefits can actually be improved on a go-forward basis for future generations on retirement?

The bill will have a number of very specific issues, many of which will get addressed during the regulatory process. But this dialogue around retirement income adequacy and pensions is an important one in this province and across the country.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen intently to the speech this afternoon by the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I, for one, as one member of the House, recognize his passion and his experience in this particular area.

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I know in my own case, I'm not an expert on the manufacturing base of Hamilton, but I can reflect on

Peterborough. In the last 24 months, we in our community developed a manufacturing renewal strategy. It's led to significant investments in GE Canada, Quaker, Tropicana and Gatorade—anybody who had breakfast with Quaker Oats this morning had that product from Peterborough.

Siemens, which has a large operation in Peterborough, 400-plus employees, just announced that they're repatriating jobs to Peterborough from the United States operations. McCloskey Brothers, which manufactures trommels for the aggregate business, is building two new plants in Peterborough. So there are good examples where communities are working together to come up with a manufacturing renewal strategy to put in place to support pensions.

The member is quite right. The Canada pension plan is an interesting vehicle, of course, brought in in 1964–65 by then Prime Minister Pearson. It was set up because they had to bring in a Quebec option to placate the interests of the province of Quebec at that time. It was set up that any amendments to the CPP down the road would have to be done through a constitutional amendment: seven provinces representing 50% of population.

Ontario's position, I believe, is quite clear. We'll be one province that will be supporting changes to the CPP. The Ontario voice, all of us in this Legislature, should be talking with our colleagues and other provinces across Canada to get them on board to come up with the necessary amendments.

I recommend to the member, too, to read the recent publication from the Senate of Canada under the chairmanship of Senator Michael Meighen, which talked about pension reform in a very comprehensive fashion. It's a great document.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from York West, Wellington–Halton Hills, Scarborough East–Pickering and Peterborough.

In reference to the member from Scarborough East–Pickering, I'm sorry that he was not happy with my last three minutes, but standing up here for an hour being frustrated and realizing what's going on in my community—I'd like to give him a tour of my community; come and see what's going on. There are people who go into my office on a daily basis, crying, upset, nowhere to go. I'm not quite sure he faces much of that in his area. Twenty per cent of the people in my riding are living below the poverty level. So when the member says that he's upset about a couple of sentences, I'm glad to hear he was listening to the rest, but he didn't mention the good stuff.

The member from Peterborough—very knowledgeable in your comments. I compliment you for your understanding of the circumstances with Siemens. I'm not quite sure that bringing jobs from the States to Peterborough is helping me, but—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just wanted to make a point.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's a point; you know, any jobs are good. I hope they're not American citizens coming up here to work for the firm.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No, no.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's good. The member from York West—you know, not everything is doom and gloom; he's right. But if he had listened at the beginning of my presentation, I did compliment the government on some of the things they're doing to change administration in the bill. I did compliment them.

Let's face it, it boils down to money. It boils down to the money that's going out of people's pockets and the money that's not coming in for pensions that they're entitled to. That's the frustration. I don't see any of that. I don't see any money coming back into people's pockets from their pension plans that have been stolen. So I really am frustrated. You're right.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to make some comments on Bill 120. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I would just make a comment as to the previous speaker. I think the previous speaker from Hamilton has perhaps unintentionally maligned a number of people here. I don't know anyone in this place where we are today who does not work hard with the poor. That's from all parties, whether it's the government, the opposing party or the third party. Absolutely everyone here does that. But I understand his frustration because he works very hard, too.

I know he thinks that, because he's done a stint with living for a couple of days off food donations—my wife and I spend half a year running a special project that contributes significantly to 10 food banks in my area. That includes St. Vincent de Paul, Ajax-Pickering Salvation Army and a large Anglican food bank. I just mention that because I think we all are of the same ilk. We all bend over backwards to help everybody else.

Bill 120—I have to tell you, I'm pleased to speak on it. We as a government are taking significant steps towards pension reform. It's perhaps overdue. We now have two major government bills in front of us: of course, Bill 236 and Bill 120. The two bills comprise the first major improvements to our pension system in Ontario for over 20 years. We must focus on protecting what we have and improving upon that as well.

The challenges before us are pretty well known to all of our members here: a fluctuating economy witnessing the largest economic recession since the 1930s. Who would have dreamt that Great Britain would be on credit watch? Who would dream that General Motors and Chrysler would be in trouble, and the other travesties that are occurring in the world? There is pension underfunding. Our population of seniors aged 65 and older is nearly going to double, and that is in the near future.

What have we done? Well, there's been steady progress. In November 2006, our government created the Expert Commission on Pensions chaired by expert Harry Arthurs—no relation to the member from Pickering-Scarborough East. In November 2008, the Expert Com-

mission on Pensions released its report, *A Fine Balance: Safe Pensions, Affordable Plans, Fair Rules*.

On April 27, 2009, I had the pleasure of putting forward a resolution on pensions. It was debated and it was carried with unanimous all-party support—and that's back a year and a half ago. On December 9, 2009, the finance minister—I guess I can't say the name Dwight Duncan, so I won't—introduced Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. On December 17 and 18, there was a national pension summit. The Ontario Minister of Finance attended, along with finance ministers from other jurisdictions from all across Canada. That, I believe, was in Whitehorse.

On March 25 of this year, under our provincial budget, some \$500 million—a half a billion dollars—went as a grant to the PBGF, the pension benefits guarantee fund. I know that has been mentioned more than once today. Approximately \$250 million was set to benefit the top-up of Nortel's pension. So we have been there, responding to the crises as they unfold.

The stakeholder round table consultations began in Ottawa on May 6. This was to gain stakeholder input on pension reform. On May 18, royal assent was given to our Bill 236—our very first bill. That was approved. On August 24 of this year we released a technical backgrounder concerning Bill 120—that's our newest bill—and through this paper invited more stakeholder input.

I'm concerned when I hear that there's not an opportunity to debate. I look around, and we have one person from one party and two people from another party here. If there certainly isn't an interest for them to sit—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, if you will. I would remind the member not to refer to the absence or presence of members in the House. Thank you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Madam Speaker, what did I say wrong?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): You referred to the number of people in the opposition parties. I would ask that—yes. Thank you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you very much. I won't reference the numbers again. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The announcement of proposed pension reforms are now forthcoming this fall, in 2010. That meeting took place in Ottawa on August 24.

On October 18, Finance Minister Duncan tabled a motion to address Ontarians without workplace pensions, endorsing a modern expansion of CPP, which is of course our Canada pension plan. That is, and I think it's worth reading again, "that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledge that about two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension and that providing a secure future for retirement is important. It therefore endorses a modest and gradual expansion of the Canada pension plan (CPP), as the majority of provinces and the federal government agreed to at the last federal-provincial-territorial finance ministers' meeting in the summer of 2010, and that the province continue to work with the federal government and other provinces to move forward on the expansion of the CPP."

On October 19, Finance Minister Dwight Duncan delivered a statement in the House regarding the introduction of Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010.

That brings us up to date. We're debating the second significant piece of legislation from our Ministry of Finance. Our government is making the first changes to pension legislation in over 20 years.

This is what Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, sets out to accomplish. It will make much-needed amendments to the Pension Benefits Act. It will strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules. It will provide stronger funding standards. It will clarify pension surplus rules and it will provide a binding dispute resolution process in the event of a pension windup. With this new proposed legislation, our government's reform to the pension system will have responded to the majority of the 142 recommendations outlined in the expert commission's report to the Ontario government. The remaining recommendations will be considered for inclusion in future reforms, such as Bill 120, which is before us today.

Why do I support this bill? I support this proposed legislation because I believe it will provide increased pension security, as it intends. The ultimate goal here is

to protect the money going to pensioners so that they remain financially secure. We must protect what we have in those pensions now and ensure that future pensions are also secure, that we don't encounter the kinds of problems we are seeing today, with the example of Nortel. As I mentioned before, about half of the \$50-million pension benefits guarantee grant from the 2010 budget is going directly to address Nortel's pension shortfall. Bill 120's proposed amendments to existing pension legislation will strengthen the pension system and prevent future pension crises.

At this point, we are making significant progress in addressing the expert commission's 142 recommendations. With this bill, our government will have responded to approximately two thirds of them. As the third party member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek mentioned—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask that the member save his comments for the next day of debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It now being six of the clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 26 October 2010****Mardi 26 octobre 2010****Speaker**
Honourable Steve Peters**Président**
L'honorable Steve Peters**Clerk**
Deborah Deller**Greffière**
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Apologies to our Buddhist constituents: that obviously wasn't the Buddhist prayer. It was a traditional prayer.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector /
Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm pleased to address the House today at this second reading of our proposed Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. This legislation, if passed, would raise the standard of accountability and transparency for hospitals, for LHINs and for other broader public sector organizations.

As you know, last year we asked the Auditor General to look at the use of consultants and external lobbyists at hospitals, LHINs and in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We did so because we knew that the Auditor General would find things that need improving.

Speaker, I should have started my remarks with the note that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Ottawa-Orléans.

We knew the Auditor General would find things that needed improving, and the Auditor General did not disappoint. He has done his job thoroughly, and we thank him for his work.

Our government responded immediately with a significant step forward to raise the bar on accountability and transparency. Our action follows the pattern of what we have done in government to continually improve transparency and accountability. This legislation is just

the latest in a series of steps we have taken since 2003, when we were told by the previous government that there was no deficit in the province of Ontario. As it turned out, there was a significant deficit. That will never happen again, because we have given the Auditor General the responsibility of signing off on our books prior to an election. That was the first step we took. We have expanded freedom-of-information provisions to cover Ontario Power Generation, to cover Hydro One, to cover universities, to cover Cancer Care Ontario. Local public utilities were brought back under freedom of information in 2004. With this proposed legislation, we are adding to that list.

It's clear that we have made significant progress to increase accountability and transparency in government. As well, we've reduced by half the money spent on consultants that have been working for government.

The Auditor General's report shone the light on practices that are completely unacceptable and practices that do not reflect respect for taxpayer dollars. We are changing that with this proposed legislation. Our government fully accepts the recommendations of the Auditor General and we are implementing each and every one of them.

In fact, we're going even further, to set even higher standards. Under this legislation, we're proposing to ban the practice of hiring external lobbyists with taxpayer dollars in hospitals, other large public sector organizations and publicly funded organizations that receive more than \$10 million in government funds. We're proposing to require large broader public sector organizations to follow tough expense and procurement rules. We're proposing to require all hospitals and LHINs to report on their use of consultants and to post online the expense claim information for senior leadership. We're proposing to require that all hospitals and LHINs sign attestations that they're in compliance with the new procurement requirements. And we're proposing to make hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012.

I want to make it clear that although we are making hospitals subject to freedom-of-information legislation, the Personal Health Information Protection Act will continue to govern all files containing any type of personal health information. No identifying information will be released by hospitals through freedom-of-information requests.

Finally, if senior executives of hospitals or LHINs fail to comply with these tough new rules, their pay can be reduced.

The very day I introduced these measures, I spoke to hospital CEOs and hospital board chairs and I put them on notice: Change is coming. I told them they have to remember who's paying the bills. I also spoke with the LHIN leadership and told them that the Auditor General's findings were unacceptable and that I was deeply disappointed. I was very pleased that Tom Closson, the president and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, acknowledged that these practices by hospitals were wrong and apologized on their behalf. Tom, like all responsible hospital executives, knows that we need every dollar possible going toward front-line health care and delivering the public services that Ontario families rely on.

0910

Ontarians are waiting less time to have key surgeries and diagnostic procedures done, and they wait less time to be seen in hospital emergency rooms. They have more access to family health care than ever before, and more than 900,000 Ontarians have found a doctor since 2003. There are 10,000 more nurses and 2,900 more doctors working in this province. This increase has far outpaced Ontario's population growth. Our investments and targeted initiatives are showing real results. It's thanks to a concerted effort by this government and its partners.

Health care is stronger than ever before, and we're turning our attention now to improving quality of care, putting the patient front and centre and providing evidence-based care to improve outcomes for patients. It is a concept that has been embraced by the health care community. I'm very proud of all these improvements in the health care system of this province and I'm proud that they were achieved in an atmosphere of improved transparency and accountability.

At the end of day, this action is all about respecting the hard-earned money of the taxpayers of this province. Knowing that Ontarians expect government to manage their money prudently makes me determined to get the best value for our health care investments. It's why we're driving quality and value into every corner of the health care system, and it's why we're raising the bar for accountability and transparency for the broader public sector with this proposed legislation.

When you have the responsibility of government, you can make a choice: You can choose to keep things in the dark or you can shine a light and make the changes for the better that people expect us to make. I urge all members to support this proposed bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa-Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I will expand on the comments made by the Honourable Deb Matthews, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, at this second reading of our government's proposed Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. As Minister Matthews has just said, our government fully supports and accepts the recommendations of the Auditor General in his special report entitled Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations.

The auditor reported on practices by some hospitals and local health integration networks, or LHINs, that are

simply unacceptable to our government and, frankly, to the people of the province. Ontarians have every right to expect that their hard-earned tax dollars will be invested responsibly to provide the services for which they were intended. The auditor's report clearly shows that when it comes to LHINs, hospitals and other broad public sector organizations, there's more work that needs to be done to meet that expectation. That's why this government acted promptly and responsibly by introducing the broader public sector accountability bill.

We've already undertaken a number of initiatives to strengthen accountability and responsibility mechanisms within the Ontario public service and its agencies. The actions outlined in this proposed legislation complement those initiatives and would extend them throughout the broader public sector. Let me outline for you the measures already in place.

The government of Ontario's policies on the procurement of consultant services require all ministries and agencies to use competitive procurement processes when they require consulting services and restrict the payment of hospitality, incidental and food expenses for consultants. In the area of lobbying, the Lobbyists Registration Act requires lobbyists who wish to lobby public office holders to register with the lobbyist registrar, who is the Integrity Commissioner. All lobbyists' registrations are available to the public on the Integrity Commissioner's website, www.oico.on.ca. Failure to file required information in accordance with the act or making a false or misleading statement are offences, and the penalty is serious. Upon conviction, an individual is liable for a fine of up to \$25,000.

Public service employees are guided by the Public Service of Ontario Act, which restricts post-service lobbying activities by former public servants, including those employed in designated senior positions in a minister's office. For one year after leaving the public service, these former public servants are prohibited from lobbying any minister's office or ministry in which they worked during the 12 months before leaving the public service.

We've put in place strong conflict-of-interest rules for vendors involved in lobbying activities. Firms that bid on government work in areas such as public relations, media relations and commissioned research services must disclose the subject matter of their lobbying activities over the past 12 months, which ministries they have lobbied and on behalf of whom.

Our government revised the travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive to provide stronger and simpler expense rules for employees at ministries, employees and appointees at classified agencies, consultants and contractors to ministries or classified agencies and designated persons in all organizations prescribed by regulation under the Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009. We have also restricted the payment of hospitality, incidental and food expenses to consultants who work within the Ontario public service.

To demonstrate our own commitment to transparency, the public has access to online listings of expenses for the

Premier, cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, political staff and senior management in the Ontario public service. There is also a link to the expenses of the chairs; appointees; chief executive officers; presidents and vice-presidents or equivalent levels; direct reports to the CEOs; and the top five claimants at 22 of Ontario's largest agencies.

In November 2009, the Public Sector Expenses Review Act gave the Integrity Commissioner the authority to review expense claims of senior officials, appointees and the top five expense claimants in 22 of the province's largest agencies. This act requires these officials to abide by the same rigorous accountability and oversight provisions that apply to cabinet ministers and political staff who fall under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act.

Our government has also been reducing spending on consulting services by focusing on strengthening the internal capacity and expertise of the OPS, and this strategy has produced great results. Consulting expenditures have dropped by more than 50%, from \$656 million in 2001-02 to \$304 million in 2009-10—more than half. Since 2003, 1,519 positions in the Ontario public service have been approved for conversion to replace work previously done by consultants. I'm pleased to report that this has resulted in an ongoing annual savings of approximately \$64 million.

In the context of the health care system, the proposed legislation reinforces the principles of our Excellent Care for All strategy: that accountability and wise use of health care resources mean better value and better patient outcomes. Ontarians want and deserve quality health care when and where they need it. They want better access and more choices. They want a health care system that is accountable and one that will be there for future generations.

When we came to power in 2003, we found a broken health care system. We've since made significant transformations to the system that have resulted in better access to front-line health care services and lower wait times. While our health care system has come a long way, we know there is a greater challenge looming: our growing and aging population. Escalating health care costs are the biggest threat to ensuring that the system will be there for future generations.

The Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, which received royal assent in June, is the first step in improving the quality and value of the health care system. This legislation means that health investments must produce evidence-based results and improve patient care. This means ensuring consistent standards, doing things because they have been proven to work and not doing things that aren't supported by clinical evidence. Improving quality puts patients first while making the most effective use of limited health care resources for us today and for future generations of Ontarians.

That same focus on value and prudent use of limited resources prompted our reforms to the provincial drug

system. Ontario is one of the largest purchasers of drugs in the world, and we deserve a better deal than the one we've been getting. In 2006, our government took bold steps to rein in the cost of generic drugs and expand patient access to medicine. Since that time, we've invested over \$1 billion and added 168 new prescription drugs to the formulary, as well as 45 new cancer products.

In June 2010, we started to further reform the prescription drug system to ensure the wider availability of more affordable drugs. That resulted in a reduction in the price of generic drugs by at least 50% across the board to 25% of the price of the original brand-name drug. That's a 50% price reduction for the generic drugs that we, the government, buy.

0920

We also eliminated professional allowances to make Ontario's drug system more accountable. These reforms are in the public's interest and Ontarians' interest. That commitment to Ontarians' interest brought about all our reforms across the health care system and indeed across the government to enhance accountability and openness, and operate in the light of day.

Our proposed legislation will raise the standard of oversight for all broader-sector entities and require them to adhere to the same rules as the Ontario public service and government agencies. I ask all members to support this proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's great to see you in the chair and it's always nice to see a female as Deputy Speaker.

I'll be speaking a little bit longer to this piece of legislation, because it is an important discussion for us to have in this chamber. I will make my remarks in a more fulsome manner later on this morning. But the reality is, I don't think this bill goes far enough. I'll go into that in a little bit. This chamber has been dealing, in the last year, with two major health care scandals that have come under this government's watch. Those are eHealth and what many would call eHealth 2.0, which is what the auditor uncovered just last week: the use of consultants and lobbyists at our hospitals and local health integration networks across the province.

Our party has called for the dismemberment or disbandment of the local health integration networks because we feel that so much money has gone into the bureaucracy, as opposed to front-line care. To make matters worse, those of us on the Progressive Conservative side of the House believe that a lot of that money is also going to consultants to help some Liberal insiders get rich. When you look at what the auditor has come out with and what the Ombudsman has said, I think that speaks to our view and I think it confirms the views that many Ontarians have that their tax dollars aren't being spent appropriately at our health care institutions across this province. We'd like to see more health care dollars go to front-line care. I look forward to speaking to this piece of legislation again.

As I say to my colleague, it's always nice for the female members to see somebody sitting in the chair who is like us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, I find it nice to see you sitting in the chair as well. That's just because of who you are, whether you're female, as you are, or not. But please, Chair, will the Chair please use its authority and power to interrupt inappropriate language in the chamber, especially the incorrect use of the word "fulsome." It's like fingernails on a damned blackboard. I would hope that the Chair would perceive that as unparliamentary language and intervene when appropriate.

The NDP critic on this matter, our member for Nickel Belt, is literally fogged in up in northern Ontario, so during the course of the morning I will be asking for consent to have her lead deferred. I'll be speaking to the bill.

What I find truly remarkable is that the minister, of course, now insists that we don't need lobbyists to access this government, that this government is only a phone call away; just flip your Rolodex over to—I'm sure at some point Ms. Matthews—the minister, rather—is going to offer up her cellphone number and her home phone number so that people in fact can just dial her up or put her on speed dial and call her instead of employing high-priced Liberally connected lobbyists. But at the same time, interestingly, people like John Matheson from StrategyCorp insist that lobbyists are the grease that makes government work. John Matheson from StrategyCorp would dispute every single thing that the minister has to say about the role of lobbyists. It will be interesting to see how powerful and effective lobbyists really are, because if lobbyists are as effective as they think they are, they will have persuaded this government to abandon this legislation before before it comes to third reading.

The committee hearings are going to be particularly delightful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make some comments following the minister and her parliamentary assistant on the introduction of Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act.

This act deals with a number of initiatives. Most important is the ban on lobbyists in the proposed legislation. It would prohibit certain broader public sector organizations from using public funds to hire lobbyists. I think this new legislation is well timed and something that the people of Ontario definitely are looking forward to.

Ontario's 259 classified agencies, such as the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and Cancer Care Ontario, are included, as well as hydro entities and the broader public service entities like hospitals, schools, CCACs and universities.

There will be procurement rules within this legislation. The procurement rules would be based on existing supply chain guidelines.

There would be expense claim rules. The government would have the authority to make expense claim directives to require rules to be set and followed by broader public service entities such as our hospitals, schools and boards.

There would be public postings of expenses. The proposed legislation, if passed, would require LHINs and hospitals to comply with directives issued by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care requiring the posting of expense claims information of designated individuals, such as CEOs, board members and senior managers, on the public website.

There's much more to this bill in its total, but there is an enforcement mechanism. The proposed legislation, if passed, would ensure that all funding agreements between the province and broader public service organizations incorporate these new accountability provisions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to join with my colleagues on this side to say how pleased I am to see you in the chair. In fact, Madam Speaker, you're everywhere. I was watching television on the weekend, and there was this speech from the Dalai Lama. They panned the crowd, and there you were, front and centre. I said to my wife, "She's just everywhere." So I'm glad you're here today, I'm glad you're in the chair and I'm so pleased to be recognized to provide a few comments on Bill 122.

I was very surprised by the comments from the members opposite. It was a pretty historic day in the province yesterday. We saw a lot of voters cast their vote for change. I think it really sounded some bells in politicians' ears right across the province.

As the member for Nepean—Carleton talked about, this government opposite has a lot to account for. I can't believe that after the awful eHealth scandal, this government hadn't been more efficient in providing some checks on our system and the fact that the Auditor General came forward and presented a second report, which we have been calling eHealth 2.0 on this side, can come again in the province.

We had so many who came forward to call us and talk to us about their concern with the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle. I can't believe that we're sitting in the House this morning and having the same type of discussion about the lack of accountability that the government has put in place. It's shameful; it's disgraceful.

I truly believe that as we move into the days and months ahead, the people of Ontario will again sound their bells loud and clear against this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Health has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the members from Ottawa—Orléans, Nepean—Carleton, Welland, Chatham—Kent—Essex and Leeds—Grenville for their comments.

I've listened carefully, and I'm actually listening for some substantive response to the legislation that is before

us. So far, I have not heard anyone who is opposed to the substance of this legislation.

0930

Just quickly, I think it's very important to note that it was under our government that we gave the Auditor General the authority to look at hospitals. When the party opposite was in power, despite their sanctimonious stance today, they did not allow the Auditor General to look at what was going on in hospitals. We asked the Auditor General to look; we asked him specifically to look at the issue of consultants. We have addressed each and every one of the recommendations from the Auditor General and we are moving forward. It seems to me that this is progress in the right direction. Others may be more comfortable never exposing these issues to the scrutiny of the Auditor General. Our approach is to look, to constantly improve accountability and transparency, and, where the Auditor General recommends we make improvements, we do that.

This legislation addresses issues that have been going on for far too long in this province under all governments. It is under our government that these practices will stop. I think our responsibility to taxpayers has never been more important than it is today. People know that the health care system is under pressure, both demographic and fiscal. We know we have issues and that if we don't respond today, the future does not look bright in health care. So we are taking those steps—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is a pleasure to be able to speak to this legislation on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus. It is no secret that this legislation marks the beginning of the end of the 39th Parliament more sharply than any other legislation or decision made by the McGuinty government since we have approached the one-year countdown to next year's election. It's the culmination of scandal, a sense of detachment from the public, and a growing sense of entitlement wrapped in a mea culpa that forms the basis of what I would call this apology bill. I believe it's also the closing chapter of a tired, worn out, out of touch and out of gas Liberal government.

This bill is nothing more than a grovelling knee-jerk reaction, a deathbed confession, some might say, by the McGuinty government, which once again has disappointed its constituents after another auditor's report exposed their penchant for getting consultants and lobbyists rich on precious health care dollars. This bill is the response to eHealth 2.0, where the Minister of Health has forced Ontario's hospitals to pay for high-priced, often hand-picked lobbyists to gain access to her and her decision-makers. Finally, this bill is another example of how this government has gotten too comfortable behind the big desks to do the small things right. The circumstances that led to this legislation have for many across Ontario become the final straw.

Had this minister and this McGuinty Liberal government truly been serious about greater taxpayer protection,

greater accountability by the public sector and more transparency in our public processes, then she would have supported my bill in May, the Ontario PC caucus bill on truth in government. It was a bill that would have prevented the abuses the minister is reacting to in the auditor's report of last week on hospital lobbyists, and I will just touch on the auditor's report. The auditor revealed last week that one hospital paid a consultant \$170,000 for expenses. When auditors asked for the receipts, the consultant asked for another \$3,000 to produce them. One consultant took a paid vacation to Japan and sent the airfare bill to Ontario taxpayers, while the whole time he was being paid his daily billing on vacation. Still another consultant expense: a bonus, a Christmas luncheon and a \$300 dinner to taxpayers. Essentially, the auditor revealed that the same waste and scandal that plagued eHealth also plagues the Ministry of Health, the local health integration networks and, sadly, Ontario hospitals, where Ontario patients rely on them for care.

I'd like to say that Premier McGuinty's promise to put a stop to this waste after eHealth and other scandals at Cancer Care Ontario, OLG and WSIB was genuine, but the truth is the McGuinty government only acts when it is to their benefit and not to the benefit of Ontario taxpayers. The Liberals only act when they are caught, and make no mistake: They have been caught time and again by Ontario's auditor.

Hence, we are now debating the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, an act, by the Liberals' own admission, that is a reaction to the auditor's report and thus, in many cases, does little more than issue weak and unenforceable directives and, in many more cases, only focuses on hospitals and LHINs when it should go toward the broader public sector.

I also note that the bill proposes that the minister can review the LHINs. This is utterly hilarious, given that this government has already broken its own law for a statutory review of the LHINs. Let's be clear: The Premier has broken his own law to review the LHINs and now he expects us to believe a new law, encouraging the Minister of Health to review the LHINs, will work. What was wrong with the old law? Why wasn't it enforced? And finally, why should we believe the McGuinty Liberals now?

The point is that the Liberals won't enforce the laws they already have on the books. Why should we believe they will enforce these new laws? We simply don't. We simply can't believe them, because the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour. The Premier used that language himself.

Furthermore, there are differences between the Liberal bill and the PC Truth in Government Act, and I argue that the Liberal bill does not go far enough to protect Ontario taxpayers. If the Liberals really wanted to span the entire so-called broader public service, they would have done so. But like so many of the Liberal bills of late, it's nothing more than a Band-Aid solution here and there.

I believe the starkest difference between the PC caucus' Truth in Government Act and this bill is motive. Where the Liberals propose a reactive apology bill to make amends for yet another health care scandal, the Ontario PC caucus put forward a thoughtful and reasonable accountability bill to prevent future mismanagement of tax dollars throughout the whole of government. In essence, the Liberals are trying to deliver an apology, while the PC caucus offered strong alternatives. Let me explain.

Last May, the Ontario PC caucus introduced the Truth in Government Act, which proposed five robust measures to create more openness and accountability across all of government. Specifically, our accountability legislation would have expanded freedom of information across all of government and would have ensured the disclosure of hospitality expenses, job reclassifications, as well as contracts and contributions over \$10,000 at all public sector bodies.

At the time, I sought all-party support, because it was a sensible plan that would cost nothing to adopt immediately, and it could have easily been done with information the government already possesses.

Having said that, the Liberals whipped their vote and, oddly, they stood against greater accountability and taxpayer protection at Ontario's hospitals, universities and government agencies, arguing at the time—and let me put forward a quote here. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville said that the bill was a “red-tape-bloat-and-spend bill,” while the so-called integrity czar, the Minister of Government Services at the time, said: “Our government has moved decisively to introduce greater accountability and transparency in the area of procurement. Our procurement policies ensure value for money by implementing open, fair and transparent competitive processes.”

The minister may want to reread his own Hansard. Had this government moved, as he said they did, to decisively introduce greater accountability and transparency, there would have been no abuses of taxpayers' dollars at LHINs or Ontario hospitals by consultants. Had they done what they said they would do, and had they followed their own rules, this wouldn't have happened.

They would also have no need for their own accountability bill if the Minister of Government Services was correct. Had they been decisive, they would have gotten it done. But they didn't, because they weren't decisive and they didn't follow their own rules.

Again, it begs the question: Why should we believe them now? Only now, after being caught again in scandal, does this Liberal government think it is appropriate to bring forward stronger accountability measures.

By the auditor's own account last week, both Liberal members couldn't have been further off the mark. One might even suggest that they misled this House, but then you would have to contend that either of them actually knew what they were talking about, which is highly unlikely. This is why I question the Liberal government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would just ask the member to withdraw that comment.

0940

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

This is why I question why the Liberal government is acting now with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. Those same Liberals will now have to eat their own words, because their own Liberal government is now forced to finally act and put forward this apology bill for its actions, or the lack thereof, as was pointed out in last week's auditor's report. In fact, I believe that the Liberal apology bill introduced by the Minister of Health sells out the Minister of Government Services and the member for Mississauga–Streetsville because they have far less influence on the government benches. For those two members—and I'm loath to say “I told you so”—the remarks made in May for greater government accountability appear only partisan as best, and at worst it looks as if this government is actually facile, very weak, and attacking opposition legislation for petty partisan purposes. That's why their own bill, while drafted on the fly, actually adopts some of the PC caucus's recommendations, notably to open freedom of information to Ontario hospitals. I wonder somewhat facetiously if the Liberal member for Mississauga–Streetsville still contends that opening government to Ontarians will create “a monstrous, paper-shuffling, red-tape-creating, money-gobbling bureaucracy”, or if he is now just seeing the light.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I would ask the House to come to order, please. I'm finding it difficult to hear the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Thank you. Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is this Liberal government doesn't want me to speak out. They don't want any opposition member, whether it's from the official opposition or the third party, to speak out about this because it speaks to how embarrassed they are that their government can't get it done. The embarrassing thing here is that this Liberal government actually thinks they can speak ill of opening transparency and accountability to all Ontarians, and then once they get caught they decide they're going to bring in legislation that will make it all better. Well, when you lose almost \$1 billion in health care funding because you didn't do your job, Ontarians are angry, and justifiably so.

Again, I think the reality is that the two members who spoke against the PC Truth in Government Act must now not want to show their faces, because they have egg all over them.

This Liberal bill stops well short of what is an acceptable government accountability plan and it stops well short of what is acceptable to Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus. Let me explain my major points of contention—and I hope the minister is listening. I also encouraged her staff this morning at a briefing to adopt some of these resolutions. We will be putting forward amendments.

We believe that this bill only opens hospitals to freedom of information, not all provincial public bodies. That is the first and probably biggest criticism we have of this legislation. It only requires expenses to be disclosed at hospitals and LHINs, not all public sector bodies, and it only requires reporting on consultants and not all contracts for goods and services at all provincial public bodies. Again, I must reiterate, it stops well short of what we in the Ontario PC caucus feel are acceptable transparency and accountability measures. This is why I feel that the bill is designed more as an apology for the Liberals who quietly masterminded a second eHealth scandal than it is for greater transparency and accountability for Ontario taxpayers.

The failings in this bill, I suppose, can be chalked up to a lack of commitment to taxpayer protection by this government and their loose regard for Ontario taxpayer dollars. If the Liberal government truly believes in protecting tax dollars, they will stop paying lip service to this bill, support our thoughtful amendments and incorporate the Truth in Government Act. As I pointed out, the Truth in Government Act had five very reasonable, achievable, robust measures for greater taxpayer protection. We feel that had they been adopted, we would have seen greater transparency and accountability at government agencies across the Ontario public service, but more than that, it would have prevented what we saw with eHealth 2.0 or, as we like to call it, the recent auditor's report.

Again, I just would like to reiterate: We were calling for expanded freedom of information across all of government. This bill, in contrast, only opens that up to hospitals. I think that to actually prove they want greater accountability and transparency, they would have opened it up to everything. Instead, this looks like a knee-jerk, Band-Aid reaction—

Mr. Steve Clark: They got caught.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—given the fact that they, as my colleague from Leeds–Grenville says, got caught. We would have ensured disclosure of hospitality expenses government-wide. That's not the case here. In fact, what will happen—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Did you do that when you had the chance?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If the minister would maybe listen for once, she would understand that her government is only going to issue directives that don't need to be followed. I think that that's actually insulting. I think that if she were to be serious about this, she would firmly adopt a protocol and policy to disclose hospitality expenses.

They've done nothing to talk about job reclassifications within the Ontario public service whereby those who are getting a new job classification and in some cases a new salary would have that posted online for greater transparency, but they chose not to do that. They have a narrow focus based on reaction and the apology that they want to give to Ontario taxpayers.

We also suggested all contracts over \$10,000 at all public sector bodies be posted online. This is happening

in other places across the country. It costs nothing to do. It would allow for people across the province, whether they're members of the opposition, members of the media or they're taxpaying citizens to go online and see what companies are making over \$10,000 in taxpayer money at various places across the province, but they chose not to do that. This is an easy, affordable and efficient way of communicating to the government.

We also have called for any contribution over \$10,000 that goes to any government agency or a transfer payment agency to also be posted online to ensure that those who are receiving public dollars in and outside of government are treating those dollars with the utmost respect. But the reality is this government is not interested in having a whole debate, a full debate. They just want this auditor's report to be buried so that they don't have to deal with the repercussions that the Ontario taxpayers are going to bring forward.

I urge the minister—if she wants to co-operate and wants to make this bill better and one that all of us in all of the political parties could work together on, she would listen to our reasonable and thoughtful proposals in the Ontario PC caucus.

The era for accountability is not new. I had the fortune of working on Parliament Hill and I remember the days of the sponsorship scandal. I know that the Federal Accountability Act was a direct response by the Stephen Harper government, trying to move federal Parliament into a greater era of transparency and accountability. We're four years behind the federal government right now because this government hasn't put forward a reasonable bill to ensure that all of our agencies, boards, commissions and transfer payment agencies adhere to a certain set of rules.

We continue to see different pieces of legislation, whether that's a Good Government Act, 2009, or a Good Government Act, 2010, which actually amends certain parts of the Good Government Act, 2009—I guess that means it's bad government. But the reality is, they've not put anything forward to prevent future abuses from happening. It's always putting something forward that reacts to an abuse that has already occurred. The question that many of us have in the official opposition, and I'm sure they have it in the third party, is, why aren't you following the rules that you already put in place?

The Premier promised us that 22 boards, agencies and commissions would post online. As of last week, 19 weren't up; 11 ministers hadn't posted their expenses online either. If they're not going to follow the rules they already have in place—and I use the LHIN example again—if they're not going to do that mandatory review that they promised us they were going to do that was actually in law and then they just sort of hid it and ignored it and broke their own law, then why should we believe that they really want to change? Why should we believe that the minister is going to issue a directive when all this bill says is, "She can do it; she's allowed to do it"? Nothing says that the minister is actually going to do it. Nothing actually says that the minister is going to

force government agencies, boards, commissions and other transfer agencies and hospitals to actually follow any sort of rules she'll come up with.

0950

In fact, it doesn't even say she's going to put forward rules; they're not codified in this piece of legislation. Think about that. This bill is so that members of the Liberal Party can go back into their ridings and say, "We're doing something about it." But if you read the fine print, no, they're not. They're not really doing anything about it. They're issuing the possibility of directives. She may do a review, she may do an audit, but it doesn't mean she will. It means that in a year from now, we're still going to uncover scandal, waste, bloat, all of that, by this Liberal government, because there is no desire to truly change. Until there's a desire to truly change and to make Ontario taxpayers believe that they've changed, we're going to continue to see bills like this: bills that are a reaction, bills that show that they have a sense of entitlement and that they've gotten caught.

I'm not going to read the articles that have been published in the last week by columnists and by others across the province in Ontario's newspapers. But, again, I think there was a real disappointment by many people across Ontario, and particularly by those who observe Queen's Park, that this government didn't do more to prevent these types of abuses, especially in this era of accountability. We saw what happened with the sponsorship scandal, the hotel Grand-Mère. The list goes on. And the taxpaying public in all of Canada at the time decided that we could do better, that the tired old Chrétien-Martin Liberal gang had abused taxpayers enough. There was a new era of accountability, and it appears that the McGuinty government didn't get the memo, and so we still see all these scandals.

It just troubles people to no end. One of the things I continually hear about in my constituency is this \$1 billion that seems to have gone nowhere for eHealth. In fact, many people in my constituency and across the city of Ottawa are still calling for a public inquiry into what happened at eHealth. They believe that their money was misused, in part because the auditor pointed it out, but in many cases they find that their tax dollars have no value anymore. I think that speaks to a broader problem in this government and to eHealth being a symptom of what people see as a broader problem with this government, which is that it has become out of touch. They believe they know how to spend your money better than you do. It also says that they know how to do your laundry better and all those sorts of examples.

What it all comes down to, when we look at this piece of legislation, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, is that it's not going to solve anything unless they do it right and unless they adopt their own rules. I think that has been the biggest and most challenging example of this government's years in office. They were swept into office. They made 50 promises, none of which they either intended to keep or could keep. They raised taxes after

saying they wouldn't. They promised LHIN reviews; broke their own laws. They promised children with autism that they would help them and then they took their parents to court. I'm ashamed of this Liberal government's actions on that file.

I'll give you a story. This is how I knew how horrific this government was. In the 2006 by-election, in which I was elected, I ran against a lady named Laurel Gibbons, whose son has autism. She decided to run for the New Democrats because that Liberal government was taking her and other parents to court. She left her family—she has three children, one of whom has autism, and she decided to take on public life for that fight. If you want to talk about accountability in the broader public sector or even accountability in the broader public, there is nothing more heinous and nasty than what that Liberal government did to those families. They're lucky other issues took over in the 2007 election; otherwise, voter anger would have been squarely at their feet.

I must say, this next year when this Liberal government will have to go out and speak to the Ontario public will be a difficult one because they have forgotten to serve the very people who have elected them. I think that's why we're starting to see a critical mass each and every day of absent Liberal MPPs. In fact, we're seeing, on average, 30 to 40 a day—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask that the member not refer to the absence of other members. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I put forward a private member's bill yesterday that—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The government House leader gets so testy around here. It must be very difficult to have to defend this government's record.

I put forward a private member's bill yesterday that was put forward the first time by a young man named George Smitherman, when he was the member for Toronto Centre. He put forward a bill that said that truancy of cabinet ministers and the Premier would require a \$500 fine if they were missing two thirds of the time. I put forward that bill to highlight the fact that what we're seeing here in this chamber is a lot of absences and it's something we need to talk about. In fact, when you look at the Premier—and he's been missing 69% of question periods, given what was reported today in the Ottawa Citizen. That's why this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask that the member not refer to the absence of people and get back to the government bill at hand, Bill 122. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Madam Speaker, I think it speaks to this bill because, again, if they want to talk about broader public service accountability, there have been and there continue to be pieces of legislation from the opposition that call for greater accountability of the government, whether that's the broader public service or ministerial accountability. We put these forward. I'm only suggesting that if the government truly is serious

about this, they would adopt some of the measures put forward by the Ontario PC caucus, whether that's the Truth in Government Act or the bill that I put forward yesterday. It's serious. They thought it was a good idea when they were in opposition. What happened after seven years? They thought it was a great idea to promise that he wouldn't raise our taxes twice. What happened? You promised you were going to do a statutory review of the LHIN. What happened?

This is a government that makes promises to the public and then doesn't follow through. What makes this broader public sector bill any different? They're coming up with new rules all the time, but they never follow them.

Again, I point to the fact that they put forward an accountability bill last year, and at the time—let me get the quote out from the Minister of Government Services, who basically said that it was all done, it was never going to happen again. Harinder Takhar, the Minister of Government Services, said, “Our government has moved decisively to introduce greater accountability and transparency in the area of procurement. Our procurement policies ensure value for money by implementing open, fair and transparent competitive processes.”

Do you know what we're dealing with in this piece of legislation?

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Why don't you read the bill instead of the talking points your government is telling you to read? The reality is, this government did nothing. This bill is actually dealing with procurement. If the member from wherever she's from would read the bill, she would understand. The reality is that you've now got a government of MPPs who are sitting in the back and over here in the rump who are told what to do and what to say. They don't think for themselves—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They can catcall all they like. The reality is, the Ontario public doesn't buy it anymore because they never follow through with a promise. If you're going to make a promise, keep it. But you're incapable of that. You're incapable. You've got a track record of being unable to keep a promise.

1000

I've got a little sheet in my desk here. I'm going to read through them because this speaks to the priorities of this government.

Remember, he promised not once but twice not to raise our taxes. Then he immediately brought in the health premium and the single largest sales tax increase, the HST. Then he brought in the eco fees, but they backtracked on that. The Ontario public are still looking for \$85 million that they were scammed out of.

I was at the time the children and youth services critic for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The children's aid society, in my first year, was caught funding officials to drive gas-guzzling SUVs and take out \$2,000 gym memberships as well as take trips right across the province. Remember how they promised

accountability measures after that? And what happened? The scandals just moved from the children's aid societies. Where did they move to? To the LHINs, to eHealth, to Cancer Care Ontario.

That brings us to eHealth, a \$1-billion boondoggle—nothing to show for it. What came out of that? More rules on how to make government more accountable. And then we still have this piece of legislation.

We've got the Green Energy Act, in which the Premier reversed his decision regarding mandatory energy audits, and that was only after the public started to cry out. I guess in a sense they may have actually been considered accountable in that regard.

They had OLG scandal 1 and then they had OLG scandal 2. I can remember—you'll probably remember this too, Madam Speaker—when, in the midst of the recession, OLG decided it was going to advertise a contest giving away German-made vehicles. Meanwhile, we make great vehicles in this province. We make them in Oshawa; we make them right across this great province. That's what they've done.

We had another scandal, at the WSIB. They promised more rules.

We've got a deficit. I remember when I first got here how they used to cry; they used to squeal over there. A few of them on the front bench would squeal over a \$5.6-billion deficit, which was caused by SARS, mad cow disease and an energy blackout. Yet when they have a \$19-billion deficit because they're spending on all their little programs that create more social engineering across the province, we're not supposed to say a word. Well, the reality is, this is a government that taxes, it's a government that spends, and it's a government that has no priorities and always sets new rules because they keep breaking the ones that they promised.

We remember the tax collector severance. I could think of nothing more unaccountable than giving people \$45,000 to move from one job on a Friday to another job in the same office, at the same cubicle, with the same title, on a Monday.

We now remember the Ombudsman, the one person who wanted to keep these folks accountable and wanted them to follow the rules, and who was the first, by the way, to say that the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus was right on the LHINs. They wanted to get rid of him before his report came out. You'll remember that. They wanted to do a fear-and-smear campaign on him.

We can talk about the sex ed curriculum, which I think was appalling and was probably the greatest—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I would like you to rule on section 23(b) of the standing orders. The member seems to be straying into sex education and other areas that are not directly related—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, member from Peterborough. I'd ask the member to get back to Bill 122. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I guess the reality is, I am talking about accountability. I'm talking about this government's

track record and their ability to move forward on things that actually matter to people and to keep the rules. It speaks to how they do things.

If I'm going to stand here and talk about the rules that they're putting in place and that they never follow through on, it also speaks to their record, whether it's sex education or eco fees; the backtracking, like G20, the secret security law, which, by the way, showed how unaccountable this Liberal government and that cabinet are.

The reality is that they'll continue to have this discussion. We'll be talking about another accountability bill when we find out that they have to apologize for yet another scandal that's probably going to come down the pipe.

The reality is, again—and I can't say this enough—they always say that they've gotten it done, that they're doing better, but they're not, because they don't follow their own rules.

I remember, a couple of question periods ago, we were standing here. There's a common theme every single time that the Premier speaks. He always says, "We can do better," and it doesn't matter what it is.

Mr. Steve Clark: He says that a lot.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He says it a lot. But of course he can do better, and this bill can do better; the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act can do a whole lot better. That's why we're calling on the government to adopt the Ontario PC caucus's Truth in Government Act. That's why I think it would be a great idea for them to move forward on a bill that I put forward yesterday to increase ministerial accountability.

When we talk about these things, I'm sure they would want me just to talk about their bill, but we would like to enhance it and make it better. That's why we're talking and debating here today. But again, you want to stifle that debate, and it's unfortunate. It's unfortunate that you only want people to speak off of the talking points you've given the member from Guelph and that you'll continue to regurgitate.

I go back to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, how he behaved at the introduction of the Truth in Government Act, which was to get petty and partisan and call it a waste bill, when in fact it was trying to streamline accountability practices across government. That means all of its agencies, boards and commissions. It means all of its transfer payment agencies. It means all of its ministries. They didn't follow through. Obviously, he's going to have to go to caucus today and find out that more accountability is in vogue, that it's the right thing to do.

This government can't continue to spend people's tax dollars and waste them without repercussions. That's why we're standing here today debating this bill and talking about more value for money. We want to open more of government to the taxpaying citizens. We want to ensure that this government, if they're going to promise to do it, will follow through. Again, I can't say this enough: If this government is going to continue to

put forward legislation, they had better follow through on it. This is a common theme. The general recurrence that we continue to hear in this Legislature is that they make a promise, and they break a promise.

This bill—I have no hope of actually seeing them follow through on everything, given the fact that all it suggests is that the government may issue directives. Perhaps the minister could answer that question—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute. I would ask that members who want to have private conversations have them in the lounge and not in the House.

Member from Nepean—Carleton, continue.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, there's government business, and they would like to do it so that they're not accountable, so they have to challenge the Chair—amazing.

As I move on today—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're having a procedural discussion. I'm sure that they want to see how they're going to respond to my remarks.

This government has continually let down the people of the province. I think that they can do better. They have admitted as much on several occasions in the last little while.

I'll conclude by suggesting to them that they've got five solid initiatives in the Truth in Government Act that they can adopt. They've got one solid initiative that actually was conceived by their former Deputy Premier who, for all I know, might be back next year as the member for Toronto Centre; they could easily adopt that and just increase the fine. I think it speaks to where we've come in the province as of late, the government rot. They call it second-term-itis. They have it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, I was struck by the participation in this debate by the member for Nepean—Carleton. She began her comments with a fervour and darned near had me speaking in tongues, and wrapped them up in the succinct way that she always does—a very powerful and effective member of this Legislature and, indeed, an effective critic of this government.

Although it's increasingly obvious that you don't have to be particularly good to be critical of this government. It's just—well, it's easy. It's a fool's pastime, if you will, because there's so much for this government to be criticized for. They lead with their chin inevitably, and they have a target that's the size of Ontario. That's how big the target is, and the bull's eye is the size of the GTA, if you will.

1010

We're going to be speaking to this bill in due course. Unfortunately, we won't have time this morning for the NDP to do its lead through our critic, the member for Nickel Belt, or for me to do my modest 20 minutes—and I regret that it's only 20 minutes, because I will be

addressing this bill, as I suspect every one of my colleagues in this NDP caucus will be, with great, great interest.

The bill is fraudulent. It's a phony piece of legislation. Indeed, it's rather pathetic because—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me; did I hear the member say “fraudulent”?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, of course.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask you to withdraw that as unparliamentary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw it, and I'll withdraw in advance anything else I might say that will be unparliamentary in the next 20 seconds.

So we have a fraud and we've got committee hearings that will inevitably flow. I'm looking forward to the delightful exchange between lobbyists, who insist that they're the grease that makes government work, and the minister, who insists that her phone is on your speed dial and just give her a call any time you want.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm reminded by my colleague from Essex of a Mac Davis song, “Oh, Lord it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way.” I think we were reminded of that song when we heard the member from Nepean—Carleton speak to this bill. We'll have a little contest: it's going to be “Name the minister, name the party.”

I'm reading from the Auditor General's report on page 25: In early 1999, the hospital single-sourced a contract. It's been worth \$60 million to this company—sole-sourced. Who was the minister? Liz Witmer, the member from Kitchener—Waterloo. Who was the party in power?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I thought that we had a ruling here that we weren't supposed to name members. Again, unaccountable.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, I do correct it: It was the member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

On page 25 of the auditor's report, the auditor speaks about another contract, started in 2002 and worth \$3.7 million, both contracts single-sourced. The party in power in 2002 was?

Interjections: The Conservatives.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And the minister? The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

On page 28: At one hospital, a consultant has been engaged since 1999 as CEO. The hospital originally single-sourced the position to this consultant. The party in power was the Conservative Party and the Minister of Health was the member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

On page 30 he talks about a contract dating from 2002: \$51,000 to a lobbying firm. Again, the party in power was the Conservatives; the Minister of Health was the member from Kitchener—Waterloo.

It's hard to be humble, but you're not perfect in every way. We all hold responsibility.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: That was an extremely interesting attempt at a game show. It's just a typical Liberal response: They love to talk about many, many years ago; they love to talk about the past, but they don't want to talk about the fact that they're getting caught—and they have to continually get caught before they actually do something. Minister, you can talk about all the quaint little game shows. We can play the 1960s game show or the 1970s game show or the 1980s game show, but the fact of the matter is, we're talking about 2010.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, and this is the reality TV we're playing today.

The fact of the matter is—and I'm so glad that when I looked at the itinerary today, that the Premier will be here. I've missed him. I'm glad he'll be here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I caution the member—

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not talking about anybody who's not here.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's his presence, not his absence.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely.

But again, had the minister and the McGuinty Liberals been truly serious about accountability, as the member for Nepean—Carleton mentioned, they would have embraced her Truth in Government Act, which was tabled in May, and provided that accountability for the greater public service.

I want to reiterate some of the things that she did mention. I sat beside her and I thoroughly enjoyed her address. Her riding is a neighbouring riding to mine and she's a great mentor to me. She has provided some wonderful discussions about accountability: the fact that she talked in May about expanding freedom of information across all government and the greater public service. I think that her bill back in May would have provided the accountability that we on this side of the House have been talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: The hospital procedures were not developed over one or two or three years. These are procedures that have come from many governments, including the years that the opposition here now was in government. Some of those procedures certainly aren't very well-defined and aren't followed, but they had their own auditors and their own auditors were supposed to be looking after the shop.

This government has made a change. We've extended the purview of the Auditor General into the broader public sector. That's what we did, and of course we asked for this report. We asked the auditor to conduct spot audits on the use of consultants in the health sector, including the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the LHINs and 16 hospitals.

We asked for that because we know that the training that the hospitals have for their procedures came from

people like former MPP Chris Stockwell. Chris Stockwell charged Ontario Power Generation up to \$10,000 in travel expenses for his family vacation in Europe. Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, Tom Long and Michael Gourley shared \$5.9 million—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member, just as we've been saying before, to mention the name of the riding, not the name of the member.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Madam Speaker, I would do that, but these are public figures. Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, Tom Long and Michael Gourley were not members. They shared \$5.9 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One. That's why we asked the Auditor General to go into Hydro One when we got here.

So, we are looking at this. We have the Auditor General going in. We are coming up with the right rules. That's what we have to do. This will make sure that hospitals—LHINs are only four years old; they have to learn a lot of lessons in consultant procurement for sure, and thank goodness they're not learning them from the Tories—and the 16 hospitals. This is the right thing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nepean—Carleton has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like a page to come forward, if it's possible, to bring something over to the Minister of Health. It's a piece of paper that says, "Why not blame Sir John A. Macdonald?" For honest to goodness' sake, this is getting a bit ridiculous. If you could bring that over, just so she understands it.

At some point in time—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me, if you could stop the clock just for a minute. This is a prop and it's out of order.

Member, please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a simple message. This is a government that continues to blame everyone as far back—in recent months, for the issue that occurred with the tax collectors—as Premier Robarts. They blame Premier Eves, they blame Premier Harris, they blame Stephen Harper for everything. Why not blame Sir John A. Macdonald?

The reality is, the buck stops with you, Minister. You've been in government for seven years; over seven years. You're changing it now because you got caught. You keep getting caught, Minister. You're an embarrassment to this chamber, you're an embarrassment to this province and unless you're going to make a decision—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop, please. I'd ask the member to withdraw that and ask her to speak through the Chair, please.

Thank you. Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw, but the reality is, this government had an option. They chose not to do it. They chose consistently, time and time and time again, not to put forward any meaningful rules. This bill is no different. And until they're prepared to make change and

stick with it, make a promise and keep it, this government has not got the confidence of anyone on this side of the chamber. This bill is nothing more than a PR stunt because they've been caught again by the auditor, and I can think of nothing more atrocious.

The first thing you did that I remember as an elected member was taking parents to court whose kids have autism, and then you mismanaged, you misspent and you wasted taxpayer dollars intended for health care. That's wrong. You've done wrong and you've got to do better. The Premier says it every day. Learn to do better.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 10:15, I declare that this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1019 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to introduce Colin Munro. Colin is a resident of South Glengarry, in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and he's a second-year student in criminology and political science at the University of Ottawa. I would like to welcome him to the Legislature.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to welcome some very special guests from GlaxoSmithKline, one of our world-class pharmaceutical leaders in north Mississauga: Paul Lucas, the CEO and president; Rav Kumar, vice-president, regulatory and development operations; and Allan O'Dette, director, external relations, policy and national private markets. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce Prem Sharma of Oakville; he's a family friend. With him are his daughter Neera Maini, a chiropractor, and his son-in-law Raj Maini, an ophthalmologist. He's a specialist surgeon trained at Cambridge University, UK. They are visiting us from Nairobi.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to extend a special welcome to page Jonathan Antony's father, Joseph Antony; mother, Viji Antony; sister Cynthia Antony; grandmother Cecilia Antony; and grandmother Karuna Nathan in the public gallery.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've got a very special school here from Mississauga East—Cooksville—actually, two—visiting today: Brian W. Fleming Public School, and joining them are teachers Jeff Rowat, Heather Childs, Ann Bick, who has been there for so many years and has done so much and is retiring this year, Shubhra Mathur, and Catherine Hooks-Hull. We also have students here from T.L. Kennedy high school. I want to congratulate them and thank them for joining us here today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to welcome to the gallery the Ontario Long Term Care Association. They're here today in recognition of Long-Term Care Week in Ontario and to celebrate advancing long-term care through innovation. Please join me in welcoming Christina Bisanz, Lois Cormack, David Cutler, Sheri

Annable, Dan Kaniuk, Brock Hall, Gary Loder, Patrick McCarthy and Robert Zober.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery west, my executive assistant, Julian Warrick, who has been with me for some time. This is the first time that he has ever had the opportunity to view the proceedings from the members' gallery, so I'm very pleased to welcome him this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Minister of Revenue, to welcome Superintendent Michael Shea from the Hamilton Police Service in the gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery the Consul General and Deputy Consul General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands at Toronto, Mr. Hans Horbach and Mr. Arie Plieger. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Consul General, Deputy, welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, there is one thing for which a Premier bears sole responsibility, and that is the naming of cabinet. The appropriate standard of conduct for a cabinet minister ultimately rests with the Premier.

I have now shared with you a comment directly attributed to the Minister of Research and Innovation and other comments he felt were appropriate to re-tweet on his Twitter site. Premier, whether it's through the social media, in a letter, in a scrum, the minister's comments were absolutely unacceptable and beneath his office. Premier, will you state categorically that you agree that this kind of libel is unbecoming of a minister of the crown?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say a few things on this. First of all, this is in reference to the municipal elections, particularly those that prevailed here in the city of Toronto. I want to take the opportunity to thank everybody who presented themselves as a candidate and who removed themselves from the comfort and convenience of the sidelines and put their name on a sign and their reputation on the line—not an easy thing to do.

Second, I want to congratulate all the winners. On behalf of my government, I want to let them know that we look forward to working with them. We bring a tremendous amount of goodwill. We think our shared responsibility is to work on behalf of the people we are privileged to represent and to find common ground and a way to make progress. That's the tone that I will bring to this responsibility, and that speaks to the goodwill that I want all of my government to represent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, it is precisely about that tone that you reference and your members applaud. All

of us who stand for public office understand that debate may get heated from time to time, but I think, Premier, you agree that there is a line. Your minister has clearly crossed that line. The accusations of the Minister of Research and Innovation were offensive and they're beneath the role of a cabinet minister. The fact that it appeared on Twitter is no excuse. The minister had the opportunity to deliberate on the words he chose. He had the opportunity to deliberate whether the message was appropriate to re-tweet as well, let alone those messages he personally constructed.

Premier, you have a very clear choice to make: You can show your disapproval, as Premier, of the minister's libellous comments. Will you call the minister to make a full, public and written apology?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's not unusual for things to be said in the heat of the moment that some of us might regret having said. I'm not going to purport to speak on behalf of any individual who offered any kind of comment during the course of this election.

I don't have the information in front of me but I do believe that at the end of the evening, when the results were in, the particular minister extended his best wishes on Twitter to the mayor-elect of the city of Toronto, Rob Ford. Again, I think that speaks to the goodwill and the genuine desire on the part of everyone in my government to find some common ground and find a way to make progress with the newly elected representatives, whether here in Toronto or from anywhere else across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, after seven years, you've changed. I knew a Premier McGuinty who would have said in the past that he would stand firmly against these types of libellous and negative attacks on Mayor Ford, on me personally and on Prime Minister Harper from a member of your cabinet.

At the Liberal convention last week, you insisted that you would not run a negative campaign. You said that it was not your style. But days later, that statement is being seriously undermined by a minister who has crossed the line in making libellous accusations.

It is well beyond the pale. You have them in front of you. It is unbecoming of a minister of the crown. Sir, if you don't call for an immediate public apology from the minister, will you then ask him to resign? This goes way across the line.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again—and I know my honourable colleague understands this—politics can be heated. It can involve a very healthy collision of ideas, contrasting perspectives and different ideologies, and by and large, that is healthy. But once in a while, people say things which they later regret. I'm not going to assign blame to any individual who offered any commentary of any kind, which they may choose to regret today in hindsight. But what I can say is that, as a government, we're bringing a tremendous amount of goodwill to the

table. We congratulate all those who won, we thank all those who presented themselves as candidates, and we will find every way that we possibly can to build on some common ground and make progress on behalf of Ontario families.

CONSULTANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm shocked that the Premier has missed this opportunity to show leadership as Premier and to set the tone for the conduct of the comments of a cabinet minister of the crown. Premier, with respect, this goes beyond ideology. These are serious accusations of bigotry, as you know. You can't hide from this; it is in the public sphere, the minister's comments on Twitter.

Let me ask the Premier if he will take on another test of leadership, since he has failed the first one. You have said that you will shine the light of day on the expenses of consultants discovered in the auditor's most recent report, eHealth 2.0. The auditor's report does not name names. If you are good to your word, sir, will you release publicly the names of the consultants who got rich off the sweetheart deals at the LHINs, the Ministry of Health and the hospitals in our province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the opportunity to thank the auditor for his work. I want to remind my honourable colleague and all of my colleagues in the Legislature here that the reason that the auditor was in fact enabled to perform this work was because, first of all, we gave him the authority to look at our hospitals; and, secondly, we then asked him specifically if he might look at these particular kinds of circumstances. He did that for us; we're very grateful. We're adopting each and every one of his recommendations, but we're even taking steps beyond that.

I would also argue that this is in keeping with the practice that we've had as a government, whether it's increasing the authority that we've given to the auditor and the Integrity Commissioner, whether it's increasing coverage for freedom of information and the sunshine list. In each and every instance where we uncover real issues that have to do with transparency and accountability, we move forward on those; we put new rules in place. And in each and every instance, they've been opposed by the opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, after seven years in office, you've changed. Your gut reaction on my first line of questioning clearly should have been to say that they were wrong, that the comments by your minister go way over the line. You failed to do so. You've changed.

Now, when I'm asking you to reveal exactly which consultants got fat and rich while Ontario families are waiting longer for services, waiting to get a loved one into a long-term-care home, waiting with their kid at emergency for 12 hours or more, you refuse to reveal the names of the consultants who got fat and rich while Ontario patients got left behind.

I'll ask you once again, Premier: Will you go public and let us know which consultants got these runaway contracts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is, again, a case when my honourable colleague is not prepared to take yes for an answer. We've had the auditor go in. We've had an independent, objective third party with tremendous expertise go in and perform a valuable public service.

The auditor specifically said—and I want to remind my colleague opposite of this—that party politics did not enter into the awarding of these contracts. He couldn't be more clear; he could not be more explicit.

There was a real issue. It had to do with how money is being spent, money received by the government of Ontario that is disbursed to LHINs, hospitals, and other public agencies and bodies. We have made some important changes to the rules. They are in keeping with what we've done as a matter of principle. We believe in accountability and transparency. That's why we've now broadened the rule base, which further reins in people when it comes to how they're going to spend taxpayer dollars.

I think the auditor again did a wonderful job on this, and that's why we've adopted every one of his recommendations—and we're going beyond that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, this is a test of your character. It's a test of your leadership. It's a test of what has happened to Premier McGuinty after seven years in office. This is now my sixth request to you to take a stand and to say the remarks of your Minister of Innovation were way beyond the pale.

You also have an opportunity now, sir, to reveal publicly, to name names of who got rich off the insider contracts and deals at the Ministry of Health, at the LHINs, at the ministry itself.

We had to use freedom-of-information requests to get the information about eHealth, the \$30-million sweetheart deal to IBM, the incredible richness of the contracts handed out to the Liberal-friendly Courtyard Group. Premier, you're preventing us from doing that again. Why don't you come clean? Let us know exactly who benefited from these contracts and shine the light of day.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the questions that begs for an answer is, why is it, in each and every instance, the official opposition has opposed our measures to enhance accountability and transparency?

One of the things that we have recently done is extend powers to the auditor so that he can, in fact, take a look at our hospitals and deal with the matter of consultants. There were over 150 lobbyists hired by hospitals, universities and others receiving public funds under the former Conservative government. They were addicted to consultants. There was a 244% increase in the use of consultants between 1998 and 2002. So far, we have cut this in half, and obviously there is more work to do.

Once in awhile, it would be nice to have their support when it comes to cleaning up their mess.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This government promised change after the auditor exposed the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. The Premier said at the time, "I take responsibility for this." Last week's Auditor General's report showed that not much has changed at all since eHealth.

I'm going to ask very clearly: Does this Premier take responsibility for this mess, and will he apologize to Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to thank the auditor for the work that he's done. The principle here that he is upholding, and one that we embrace, has everything to do with accountability and transparency.

It may very well be that taxpayers give their money to the provincial government, and it may very well be that we transfer those dollars outwardly to LHINs, hospitals, colleges and universities. But the fact of the matter is, we remain responsible for how they're spent out there on the front lines. It became clear to us that they weren't being spent in keeping with the modern-day standards and values of our taxpayers and our families.

That's why we take responsibility for that. That's why we asked the auditor to go in. That's why we gave him authority over hospitals. That's why we're adopting every single one of his recommendations and even going further than that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty Liberals have let well-connected consultants and lobbyists get rich while patients line up in hospitals in places like Thunder Bay and Sudbury. Hamilton families are losing an adult emergency ward in their community.

When will the Premier simply apologize to families for squandering their precious health care dollars in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what our families are looking for is action, and I am pleased to say that we're taking action on a couple of counts.

First of all, when a problem arose, we asked the auditor to get in there, take a look at things and make recommendations. We've adopted all of those and, in fact, have taken a step further.

Beyond that, they've asked us to take action when it comes to improving the quality of their health care. That's why nearly a million more Ontarians have access to a doctor. That's why we have 10,000 more nurses. That's why we have 200 family health teams. That's why we have shorter wait times. That's why we're building 17 more hospitals. I think we have 120 major renovation expansion projects for our hospitals.

1050

So, again, our responsibility is to continue to make progress on two fronts: One is in terms of the quality of the health care to which families are gaining access, and secondly is to take those steps, as and when required, to make sure we're protecting their precious tax dollars, and that's what we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: While rape crisis centres in Ottawa hospitals struggle to retain the nursing staff that they need to provide services to women when they need them and while patients in Brantford face the loss of an award-winning mental health program, the Premier allows millions of health care dollars to get dished out to insider consultants and lobbyists. Why, with that context, will the Premier not simply own up to the mess and apologize?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've introduced a new bill—I think it's a very important bill. I think it represents real progress. I think it follows hard on the heels of other measures we've taken to enhance accountability and transparency.

But I think there's an important question that remains outstanding—we've introduced a bill in this Legislature—and that question is, will the opposition parties support this latest in a series of measures to enhance accountability when it comes to the protection of taxpayer dollars? I think it's very simple and it's very straightforward. There was a problem before us and we found a way to solve that problem. It represents, as I say, yet another in a series of steps to enhance accountability and protection for taxpayer dollars, so I put it to my honourable colleagues opposite: Will they or will they not be supporting this latest in a series of measures to better protect taxpayer dollars?

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The Auditor General's report found that public health care dollars were squandered at each and every one of 19 hospitals and LHINs that he audited. Things were so bad that he concluded, "The fix was in," when it came to doling out contracts and cash. Does the Premier agree with that startling assessment? And if he does, does he also agree that families everywhere across this province deserve to know whether the exact same thing is going on in their local hospitals and their local LHINs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, we accept the auditor's report. That's why we've introduced legislation that we are hoping the opposition will support, to address the very serious issues that the auditor found when he went in at our request.

Let's just remember. We are the government that actually gave the Auditor General the power to look at hospitals. The auditor found that under governments of all stripes, these practices have been going on. It's time to put an end to those practices, and that's why we've introduced the legislation. These are practices that have been going on for a long time, but they will end under our government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: From expensing bar tabs, to a vacation to Japan, to million-dollar sole-source contracts,

the Auditor General exposed a culture of squandered public health care dollars at 19 out of 19 hospitals and LHINs.

Will the Premier now instruct the Auditor General to conduct a spot audit at every single other hospital and LHIN, so that families across this province know that their health care dollars are going to front-line care where they belong?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When we asked the Auditor General to go in and look at what was going on in hospitals, in LHINs and in the ministry, he did it in a way that met the very high standards that we expect of the Auditor General. He found that there was work to be done to improve transparency and accountability. We are following each and every one of those recommendations.

I have spoken with the hospital CEOs and the hospital board chairs, and I have told them that this is to be taken very seriously. They need to go through all of the expenditures in their organizations to make sure that they are complying, and we are making that law.

The Auditor General can do whatever the Auditor General determines is in the best interests of this province, and we encourage him to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families have a right to know whether their health care dollars are being diverted to well-connected insiders and lobbyists. Since the Auditor General uncovered a series of problems at every single hospital he looked at, people are left wondering, is this just the tip of the iceberg? Why won't the Premier ask the Auditor General to investigate all hospitals and LHINs to make sure that public health dollars are in fact going to front-line care in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is no question that these practices are going on throughout the province. When the member opposite says that the Auditor General found problems at each and every hospital he looked at, that's good enough for me. I know that we have a system-wide issue. That is why we are introducing the legislation that will prevent these practices from happening in the future. This is legislation that will apply to all hospitals. We are going beyond what the Auditor General recommended because we're extending this kind of accountability and transparency to the broader public sector.

We welcome the advice from the Auditor General. We encourage the Auditor General to do his work and do it well. I don't mind standing up and being accountable for the changes we are making. That's our job, to continually improve value for money for taxpayers.

CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. The auditor looked at consulting contracts at University Health Network, Kingston General Hospital and Trillium health network. Documents uncovered by

the Ontario PC caucus reveal that John Ronson and the Courtyard Group were handed sweetheart consulting deals by University Health Network, Kingston General Hospital and Trillium health network.

But not only have you refused to reveal this information yourself, you won't shine a light on how much Ontario families paid your former election campaign chair. Are you refusing to shine a light on these deals to protect Liberal friends and insiders, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General specifically looked at the question of whether there were party politics at play, and here's what the Auditor General found: He said basically that party politics did not enter into the awarding of these contracts. He went on to say, "We didn't see any evidence that it was awarded based on party politics."

I would suggest that the member opposite actually reflect on the words of the auditor. I think it's only appropriate that when we ask the auditor to look at something and he comes back and reports a finding, we respect that finding. The Auditor General very clearly said that party politics did not enter into the awarding of these contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families have heard all this McGuinty Liberal doublespeak before. Laurie Lashbrook has deep ties to the Liberal Party, having donated thousands to your party and to the health minister herself, but it wasn't your shining a light or leadership that exposed the sweetheart deal Lashbrook was given to spin your plan to shut down the emergency room in Wallaceburg. Ontario PCs uncovered it through freedom-of-information requests. What other Liberal-friendly consultants were handed sweetheart deals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Since the auditor released his report last week, I have tried to take the approach that this is a problem that belongs to all of us. There is no party that can say that, under their watch, these practices did not go on. In fact, it's very clear that, under all parties, the role of lobbyists and the role of the consultants has gotten to a point where we need to end the practice. We need to end the practice, and we're taking responsibility by ending that practice.

But to suggest that the Conservative Party is lily-white and Polly-pure when it comes to lobbyists and consultants simply does not reflect the fact. The member opposite, when she ran for leadership, had a campaign manager by the name of Andrew Boddington. His job—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question, too, is to the Minister of Health. October is Eye Health Month in Ontario, and optometrists are frustrated. Almost a year ago, the Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act received royal assent. This legislation gave optometrists prescrib-

ing rights which would move Ontario in line with virtually every other jurisdiction in North America, yet the government has still not passed the regulations that would allow optometrists to provide their patients with the care they need.

1100

The McGuinty government promised an expedited process but, instead, has been dragging its heels for nearly a year. Why is the minister impeding this important change?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We, as you know, have an organization called HPRAC, the health professional regulation—I should know what that stands for. They have come forward with recommendations. We have moved on many of the recommendations of HPRAC in the past so that we now have an expanded scope of practice for many of our professionals, including our pharmacists, our nurse practitioners and others.

This is work that we're doing. We do it carefully, but we do it in a way that expands our ability to care for the people of this province. When there is an expanded scope of practice, what that means is that more people will get access to that care. We do have to do it in a responsible way, and this is something that we're looking at very closely.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm not sure the minister answered that, but we'll try again. In 2004, the McGuinty government delisted optometry services, making this essential health care service out of the reach of far too many Ontarians. Now the government is dragging its heels about a regulatory change urged by experts, optometrists and patients. These delays are costing our health care system needless money and putting patients at risk.

In honour of Eye Health Month, will the minister commit to concrete timelines for the completion of this change? Just tell us when you're going to do it.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member for the question, and I know that this is an issue where people in the eye health world are very interested in seeing what we're going to do.

We are continually working to improve health care. I'm extraordinarily proud of the accomplishments of this government. We have almost a million more people with access to primary care. We've got almost 3,000 more physicians and more than 10,000 more nurses working. We're taking action when it comes to bringing down the price of prescription drugs. We're also taking action when it comes to the use of prescription narcotics. We've introduced legislation called the Excellent Care for All Act, which really starts to shine the light on quality of care across this province.

I'm proud of our record, I'm proud of where we're going, and I look forward to continuing to expand the scope of practice for the people of this province.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Economic Development and

Trade and small business. You will know that in this province alone, there are more than 379,000 small and medium businesses; in other words, that means that 99% of all businesses in Ontario are either small or medium-sized. They employ nearly 2.9 million Ontarians. They account for \$250 billion in economic activity. That makes their success vital to the strength of Ontario's economy.

The recent global economic downturn has been hard on small business, and it makes it hard for them to do what they do best: to provide essential services to the people of Ontario and to grow and prosper. I've heard from a number of those small businesses in my riding. They've told me that they would be able to hire more people and be more productive if the government could assist. With October being Small Business Month—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to respond, and in particular to this member from Oakville, who has been a long-time supporter of small business, not just in his riding but, of course, right across Ontario in his work.

I am delighted to send greetings to all of the small businesses across Ontario. They are truly the backbone of our economy. This is Small Business Month, and in that regard, we are delighted to say that just the other day in this House, we passed the Open for Business Act. Open for business means that truly, we have taken a hard look at what we can do to make life easier for business in Ontario. We wish we would have had the support of the opposition parties. They like to talk about being open for business; the Ontario government today is actually doing it.

Yesterday, we had an opportunity to meet with the Small Business Agency of Ontario, representing all small business across Ontario. They are delighted to be at the table and engaged in making life easier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's encouraging news for small and medium business in Ontario. Small businesses create jobs for people all across this province, and for this reason it's important to make sure that they're equipped with the tools they need to thrive. Some of the most important tools at a business's disposal, whether they be a small or large enterprise, are tax breaks and incentives. It is for this reason that I rise in the House and ask the minister to explain to this House some of the ways in which government is working to lessen that tax burden on small and medium-sized businesses in this province so they are able to thrive.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: This question on competitive tax to the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you for the question. This government is committed to small and medium-sized businesses; they are the backbone of our province. We are so proud of all of them.

As a former small business owner, I can tell you that this tax package makes good sense; it's going to help

small businesses. Some of the ways we're doing that: We're reimbursing small businesses when it comes to their input taxes. We're cutting the corporate income tax rate from 5.5% down to 4.5%. We're also eliminating—we're eliminating—for the first time, the small business deduction tax, and we're also helping small businesses right now with the transition to going to the HST. We're helping with some transitional support.

I'm just very proud, and I want to thank all the small businesses in our province.

PREMIER'S RECORD

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. It's official: Canada's worst government has Canada's worst Premier. In a peer-reviewed study, Premier McGuinty ranks dead last among the country's Premiers. It could have been because he says leadership means shining a light on transparency, but this Premier refuses to name names of who is getting rich off sweetheart consulting deals. It could be because he has backtracked so often, Ontario families have no idea what he stands for any longer. But the truth is that it is because he is the worst at managing government spending, taxes, debt and deficits.

When will the Premier stop dragging Ontario families down?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I am delighted to address this question. It is imperative that people in this House understand why Ontario, ahead of all jurisdictions in North America, is dragging the most foreign direct investment here to Ontario. If what this member says is true—it can't possibly be true. For two years in a row, Ontario has led every jurisdiction in North America, with more FDI related to job creation to Ontario—ahead of Texas, ahead of California, ahead of New York. That is the new Ontario, and that is what we fight for in the House.

We wish we had the opposition behind us, but we don't. They oppose every initiative for business or economic development that we have brought to this House. We will continue to fight for small business, and I expect that member in particular to be on our side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Start the clock. The members will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Notwithstanding what the grand dame of the theatre has to say—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member—leave the clock running. Once again, I want to remind everyone about the importance of speaking through the Chair, and I say that to both sides, because it does take away from some of the confrontation that comes out in here. But we can't start delivering

personal attacks at one another. I did not feel that was an appropriate comment, and I'm going to ask you to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It was a compliment, but I withdraw it.

The authors of the study say that since being elected in 2003, Premier McGuinty “has been nothing short of a disaster at managing Ontario's finances and pursuing sound long-term economic policies.”

The taxes on fuel and home energy that Ontario families now pay under this Premier have driven the consumer price index up a full point higher than the national average. He said that the HST would make business more competitive, but GDP data shows Ontario's economy shrunk last month. He said the HST would create 600,000 jobs, but we're up 23,000.

1110

How did every other Premier manage to avoid the messy legacy this Premier is leaving—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me say again to this member opposite—and I believe that this member wants what's best for Ontario and he wants people to have jobs and he wants to see businesses investing in Ontario, so let me just use automotive by way of example.

Why, in the last six months alone, have our five OEMs—Ford, GM, Chrysler, Honda and Toyota. Why have we seen a total investment of over \$2 billion in the automotive sector just in the last six months, my friend? That is very important, because it means 300 automotive supply companies that are looking at increased volumes, that are looking at getting back into business.

We know that the last two years were tough on Ontario, tougher than in any other province, but I will tell you this: Every other province is watching today the kinds of investment in automotive, in green energy, in ICT, in financial services, the likes of which the rest of the country is not seeing. We are seeing it here in Ontario because we have had good, sound economic policy, good, sound—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. New question.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you will know that you're in charge of a railway in this province called the Ontario Northland. Here's the issue: If I'm a passenger leaving Moosonee and I buy a rail ticket to leave Moosonee to come down to Toronto and I miss the train, I don't get my money back and I can't even reschedule that train ride. Why is it that we're treating everybody south of Moosonee differently, where a

purchased ticket is good for 12 months? That's not the case for the citizens of Moosonee.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As the member well knows, we are very proud of the support that we have for the ONTC, and I appreciate the question. I can't provide him with the details; I'm not even aware of that happening.

We know how important the ONTC is in terms of providing extremely valuable transportation and telecommunications services to northeastern Ontario. Certainly, the last five years, as the member would know, have been very productive for the ONTC. We have implemented a new Northlander train schedule that's resulted in an increase in passengers and improved the train's performance. We've replaced 168,000 railway ties; there has been some extraordinary work done in that regard. Obviously, the contract to refurbish the GO Transit vehicles is very important as well.

Certainly in terms of the day-to-day operations and decisions that are made by the ONTC, I'm quite willing to pursue that on the member's behalf. I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It appears the minister of native affairs doesn't take seriously that First Nations people are being discriminated against and not able to use their train tickets like anybody else in this province.

My question to you, Minister, is: We've been dealing with the ONTC for some time. There was a promise to fix this discrimination so that any citizen of Ontario, no matter where they are on the rail line, would be able to purchase a ticket and use it within the 12 months, as is the case with the Northlander. I want from you a commitment that you are going to intervene and ensure that the citizens of Moosonee are dealt with the same as anybody else on the ONR line, from Cochrane going south down to Toronto.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly I will commit to pursue this on the member's and the constituents of Moosonee's behalf.

We are indeed very proud of the service provided. Our government has been tremendously supportive of the ONTC and will continue to be. Certainly, decisions such as those—I'm not familiar with the details. I will find out about it and will pursue it on behalf of the constituency you're representing.

FAMILY LAW

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Attorney General. The family justice system is an area that touches many people's lives. It is used by people when they're already dealing with stressful and often difficult emotional issues like separation and divorce. Their children may also suffer from negative impacts if these issues are not addressed in the best possible way.

Over the years, I've heard from my constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham who have had experience with the family justice system. They feel they had little opportunity to inform themselves on the process involved and

how it would impact their children. They also told me of the difficulties they had once they decided to go to court and how they found it to be an interminable process.

Can the Attorney General tell this House what our government is doing to ease this inherently difficult time and make the process more manageable for people?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Oak Ridges–Markham makes a very important point. People who come before the family justice system in times of terrible stress—very emotional—need a system that works faster. It needs to be more affordable and it needs to be less confrontational.

Last December, we launched a four-pillar approach to reforming our family justice system. The first pillar is to make sure people get more information up front about the system, so we are instituting mandatory information programs for all who come before it. Second, identify the issues and get people to where they need to be to resolve them. Third, provide better access to free legal advice. Fourth, cut out all the paperwork and reform the rules so that we have less paper, less process and better resolution for those who really need a resolution to these very challenging issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I know that my constituents will be happy to hear that the government is moving ahead on these important reforms of the family justice system.

The justice system can be intimidating and costly for people. When people are already under so much stress in dealing with family issues, they are confronted with an unfamiliar system that they are required to navigate. They lack the knowledge that would allow them to make informed choices on how best to proceed.

Can the Attorney General tell the House how this government is making the family law process clearer and helping these families to get the information they need in order to make informed decisions?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again, a very important point: The mandatory information program is designed to get people information about the system, about resources, about how to resolve these very emotional issues in a non-confrontational way, if that's appropriate.

Yes, we made it mandatory, because if it's voluntary, the people who don't need to be there will always be there, and the people who really need to be there will never be there. So we've made it mandatory.

We started in Brampton and Milton and we've already had 800 people go through. We'll be moving to 17 more sites by January 1. We're very excited about that. We're looking to see how we can move to the remaining 30 sites in the province of Ontario.

This first pillar is enormously important to the speedy, effective and less costly resolution of these very emotional issues. I thank the member for the question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Health com-

mitted to working with MPPs in a non-partisan manner on their local health care issues, saying once again that she thinks MPPs are the best lobbyists.

That being her stated belief, will the Premier inform MPPs today precisely when the government's long-promised 10-year plan for hospital capital projects will be publicly released?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can say that is a matter that's still under active consideration, still being developed. But what I can say is that we're proud of the progress we've been able to make so far. My honourable colleague knows that we're building 17 new hospitals in the province of Ontario. He may know that we have over 100, I think, substantive renovation and expansion projects either under way or already completed at our hospitals. We're making a massive investment in new capital when it comes to ensuring that families in all of our communities have access to the best possible health care.

What we want to do, of course, is build on that going forward, hence the rationale behind our 10-year plan. If my honourable colleague has any specific advice with respect to his community, obviously, that's the kind of thing that we want to consider.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the Premier for taking the question and not referring it. The Premier was quoted in June of last year in the Waterloo Region Record, saying that the list of hospital projects might be released that fall, now more than a year ago. Hospitals need to know where they are on the list so that they can plan their projects. The Groves hospital in Fergus needs the Minister of Health's permission to move to the next stage of planning for a new hospital. Georgetown has approval for a new CT scanner but needs a small capital grant.

We now know that millions of tax dollars were wasted on lobbyists at other hospitals, money that could have gone to hospital capital projects.

Will the Premier ask the minister to convene a meeting in the near future with Groves and Georgetown hospital representatives, listen to their plans and commit to helping them succeed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think families have come to the conclusion that we're on their side when it comes to their health care. Whether you take a look at the investments we've made in hospitals—hospital funding is up 50%; that's \$5.4 billion since 2003. It's up another 5% this year—the number of new doctors we've hired, and I think it's now up to 2,700, over 10,000 more nurses, new technologies or new drugs being funded, we keep moving the yardstick forward. There's always more work to be done. There are tremendous pressures when it comes to health care.

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One of the things that will not serve Ontario families is the continuing commitment on the part of the official opposition to cut \$3 billion out of health care. I don't

believe that's acceptable, I don't think that's helpful, and I don't think families will support that, either.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has told the Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex to cut the number of children it serves by 25%. Can the Premier tell us, what are the children at risk and the families in crisis supposed to do? Where are they supposed to go for help?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to talk in this House about the incredible transformation and approach to finding sustainability that we have undertaken in the last year. We've put in place a commission of experts, who have travelled the province, spoken to more than 2,000 people and have met with every children's aid society. We're absolutely committed to making sure that our services remain steady and stable for the children and families who need them.

At the same time, it's critically important for us to find a pathway to sustainability for these important services so the phone will be answered, the door will be open and services are available in communities for families who need them. Over the past decade, investments have been continually made into children's aid societies, from \$500 million up to \$1.4 billion now. We need to find a way to ensure that those dollars are used to the best outcomes of children and families, and that's precisely what we are committed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it's an incredible transformation all right: It's an incredible transformation that expects these agencies to provide services without any resources and refuses to acknowledge that they have mandated services they have an obligation to provide.

New Democrats used freedom of information to try to get an understanding of the exact details that the McGuinty government is requesting in terms of changes, but the government—go figure—refused to give us any information. So what does it look like? We could be talking about cuts that are significant, cuts to front-line services like the closure of the Gunn, Cheapside and Argyle Street homes for children at risk, reduction in respite services at Merrymount Children's Services and the loss of vital family support programs.

Why won't the minister disclose full details of the proposal she has for slashing programs for at-risk children and youth in London-Middlesex?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I am shocked by a question that says that we can't improve this system for kids in Ontario. The outcomes for kids in Ontario are not up to our collective aspirations, and it is our responsibility—and we take that responsibility seriously on this side of the House—to find a way to ensure that services are delivered in the appropriate manner, that kids get the

services they need and that all of our kids have what they need.

Let's give an example. At the Hamilton children's aid society, funding has gone up by 24%. At the same time, Catholic children's aid society funding has gone up by 17%. We need to find a way to ensure that children are at the centre of what we do. That is the work we are undertaking, and we are not scared of finding a new way to do this work if that means we will do better for Ontario kids.

I hope that the members opposite will start fighting for Ontario's kids instead of saying that we have to stay with the status quo.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: My question is for the Minister of Education. In today's world our students are going to require the skills needed to ensure their success in an ever-changing economy. They will need to have skills that meet the demands that will be placed upon them through a competitive job market in the future.

I'm hearing from constituents that it is harder and harder to get highly skilled trade workers. What is our government doing to help train workers in my riding to support the economy?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy that the member has brought to this House issues that he is hearing from his constituents. I'm sure that others in the House have heard those same questions.

I'm happy to say that our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that we have programs in our secondary schools that will open the doors to trades for our young people. That is why our government has implemented the specialist high skills majors program. In the province of Ontario, we now have some 28,000 students in our secondary schools participating in these programs. These programs are being offered in disciplines like agriculture, business, the environment, health and wellness, aviation, sports, and the not-for-profit and energy sectors. We have participants from the communities, who are very happy to understand that there are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: A follow-up to the Minister of Education: Keeping students engaged and interested in school is of vital importance. Without an educated workforce, all of Ontario suffers. We need to keep investing in our most precious resources: our children. Our government needs to ensure that all students are receiving the attention they need and are being engaged in the classroom.

Minister, what effects are these programs having? What can I tell my constituents about how these initiatives are having an impact?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important for everyone in this House to understand that our government is providing a range of programs that will enable students at the secondary level to be successful, so that they can go on and graduate and be trained for a post-

secondary career. Our initiatives include the expanded co-operative programs and dual credit programs, in addition to our specialist high skills majors programs.

As a result of our focus on enabling secondary students to be more successful and to meet a very high bar of achievement, the graduation rates in Ontario have increased from 68% in 2003 to 79%. Fully 79% of secondary students are now graduating. This is good news for the students, it's good news for our communities, and it's good news for our province. We need those students at their best.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO CALEDONIA

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: Today Christie Blatchford launched her book chronicling the sorry saga of the occupation of Douglas Creek Estates in Caledonia. Her book is titled *Helpless: Caledonia's Nightmare of Fear and Anarchy, and How the Law Failed All of Us*.

Some questions, Premier: Does this wrap it up? Is this the final say on what went wrong down in Caledonia?

Another question, Premier: Now will you get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're working very hard with surrounding municipalities and with Six Nations, and we're working to engage the federal government more actively in a resolution of issues that have been around for more than a century.

I want to recognize the hard work that has gone into this already, but I say we need to find a solution for the future. The fact of the matter is, before the events that have given rise to some of my colleague's questions, people from all the communities lived together, worked together, played together, and they do to this day.

Although it will not be easy to find, there is a resolution here that we're going to work very hard to uncover.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Premier or the Attorney General. In her introduction, Christie Blatchford states:

"What *Helpless* is about is the failure of government to govern and to protect all its citizens equally....

"Over the ensuing four years—and then some, as the occupation continues to this day—the rule of law was utterly decimated."

Premier or Attorney General, these are serious allegations. Is this the final say? Is this how the record stands? Is this how the record will stand, or will you now call a public inquiry?

1130

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My colleague opposite will remember that there was a public inquiry. It was called the Ipperwash inquiry, and it was a result of a terrible tragedy that resulted from a different approach. That inquiry, which took several years and contained many recommendations, is really the starting point for a better, more fruitful approach to the resolution of issues.

Let's be clear that none of these issues are easy, otherwise they would have been resolved. The land claim issues, which the federal government must resolve, have been around for more than a century. There's no cookie-cutter approach; there's no cookie-cutter answer.

The Linden inquiry was good advice; we're following it. We're working with everybody to find a resolution to this very challenging situation.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. For the past several months, up to 150 trucks a day have been dumping contaminated soil from the Toronto area into an old gravel pit north of Whitby on the Oak Ridges moraine, endangering the water supply for a large area of southern Ontario.

Local citizens have been asking the Minister of the Environment to take action. The ministry has done nothing. Why won't the minister put a stop to dumping at 13471 Lakeridge Road and order a full site assessment and cleanup of the site?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question.

We take our responsibility at the Ministry of the Environment very seriously. It is our job. It falls to us 24/7 to make sure that we're protecting our air, our land and our water, so allegations that are made that come before our ministry are investigated. And I can assure the member that allegations that are made about any practice which is illegal under the laws of the province of Ontario are investigated. My ministry takes all of those situations very seriously.

I would ask my colleague—if he has information that he wants to share with me as the Minister of the Environment, I'd be more than happy to receive that information, I'd be more than happy to meet with him, and I'd be more than happy to meet and listen to the concerns that would be raised by the duly elected council members of that area.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm happy to meet with the minister any time, but there's a far more substantial issue here. Townships and municipalities lack the necessary bylaws and power to protect against the dumping of contaminated landfill. Even after the township of Scugog withdrew the operator's permit, dumping continued.

The McGuinty government has left it up to the local townships to regulate the dumping of such fill, even though townships lack the capacity to assess what is dangerous or to curtail the dumping if it is dangerous.

When will the minister take action to ensure that this sort of contamination, this sort of dumping, is stopped?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member that the question of the dumping of clean fill is something that is under the purview of the municipality.

But if there's anyone in the province of Ontario who decides to abuse those rules and dump fill which is not clean, then that is a matter that comes before my min-

istry. I can share with the House that that is an active investigation of our ministry, because we are aware of the allegations that are made in regard to Scugog. I have every confidence in my Ministry of the Environment inspection people and our enforcement people to take appropriate action.

Again, when it comes to clean fill, that is the responsibility of municipalities. But if a business decides to break the laws of Ontario, flout the rules here in Ontario and take contaminated soil and dump it, then we have a big problem with that. I can assure the member that appropriate action is being taken in that regard.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Minister, as you are aware, the forestry sector continues to face significant challenges. However, our government has assisted businesses and industry in this sector by providing grants and loan guarantees for equipment and modernization. We've also provided electricity rebates, reduced stumpage fees, uploaded road costs and introduced a northern industrial energy program worth \$150 million a year.

Recently, you announced the reopening of the pulp mill in Terrace Bay, with \$25 million in support from our government, that will allow 350 employees to return to work. Last week, a new partnership was reached between government, industry and several First Nation communities in northern Ontario.

Minister, can you please elaborate on this new partnership and what it will mean for the parties involved?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks for the question. This is a tremendous story. About 10 days ago, Weyerhaeuser, a world-class forestry company, along with several other forestry companies in partnership with several First Nations under the Miitigoog co-operative, signed an agreement that transferred the single sustainable forest licence, SFL, of the Kenora Forest to a co-operative shareholder, chaired by Chief Eric Fisher of Wabaseemoong First Nation. This transfer is just tremendous news. Among other things, it advances forest sector business opportunities for aboriginal communities as full partners with industry. We're providing funding for this project as well.

We're certainly proud to work with Miitigoog Limited Partnership and Weyerhaeuser as we take steps to transition towards a modernized tenure and pricing system. This kind of partnership bodes very well for future co-operative endeavours and shows we can work well and successfully together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. David Oraziatti: I appreciate that response, Minister. We appreciate hearing about this exciting news and this exciting partnership and how it will benefit the region's economy. The fact that these types of agreements are being forged among partners in the forestry sector demonstrates that our government, First Nation

communities and industry are serious about working together to oversee responsible management of our crown forests.

Minister, you previously referenced transitioning to a new forest tenure and pricing system. Can you please explain to the House the new forest tenure system, how it will work and why it's important to make these reforms in northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, I think this co-operative that was put in place is a good example how we can move forward. The forest tenure reform we're working on is similar to the principles of this. The old system, the system we now still work under, gives mills, ultimately, the responsibility to manage Ontario's forests in essence in exchange for access to our wood supply. In some cases, this is not working as well as we think it should have, which is why we're moving forward.

We're now in the process where we want to move forward on testing the principles of our modernized tenure system, so we'll be establishing pilot projects for two local forest management corporations, probably one in the northwest and one in the northeast, that will work together to manage the forest with representation on their board of directors from local and aboriginal communities.

That's why we're so pleased that the sustainable forest licence has been transferred to Mitiigoog. It signifies, I think, exactly the type of partnership we will want to see occurring in the forestry sector, as we move forward with these new changes to the system.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, correcting the record of October 19, 2010, while I was speaking in the chamber: I was speaking about Warren Kinsella. I said that I like Warren Kinsella; that was accurate. I said he was an expert at mudslinging; that was accurate. I said I only wished he was one of ours rather than the Liberals'; that was accurate.

But I then refer to him as the American king of mudslinging. That was a gross misstatement on my part. Of course, Warren Kinsella is a Canadian. I apologize to Mr. Kinsella, to Americans and to Canadians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is a point of order; one can correct their own record.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DALAI LAMA

Mr. Randy Hillier: Over this past weekend, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Toronto as he continues his fight for freedom, justice and democracy throughout the world. As you all know, the Dalai Lama was forced

to flee from Tibet following the Chinese occupation in 1959 and ever since has been on a global mission to promote world peace and tolerance. The Dalai Lama was awarded the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts towards a non-violent liberation of Tibet.

The purpose of the Dalai Lama's visit to Toronto this past weekend included the opening ceremonies of the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, as well as a speech delivered to an audience of thousands at the Rogers Centre.

As a member of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, I would like to personally congratulate the Dalai Lama for his persistence in promoting world peace, freedom and justice, and his pursuit of democracy.

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: On Wednesday, February 27, 2008, I announced \$9.8 million to fund the creation of a new health sciences facility, to be added to Trent University's DNA building. This new facility would expand Trent's nursing and psychology programs and new research laboratories.

Ms. Bonnie Patterson, past president, said:

"This investment by the province will advance Trent University's vision for the expansion of its health sciences programs and strategically position the university to take advantage of emerging program opportunities in the growing health care field. We thank the Premier, Minister Milloy and our MPP, Jeff Leal, for their leadership and their generous support."

On Monday, October 25, 2010, I attended the grand opening of this facility, newly named the life and health sciences building. Our funding played a significant role in the building of this facility, which will be a driver to establish new collaborations with the college sector, the new Peterborough Regional Health Centre, the local health integration network, and emerging organizations such as ICAV.

The province's investment of \$9.8 million in Trent's new facility reflects the priority this government places on health and life sciences and their importance for our future prosperity in this region and Ontario. The life and health sciences building will become a hallmark for excellence in teaching and research. This is not only an investment in the university, but it's an investment in our future. The youth of today will be the health care providers and researchers of tomorrow.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Steve Clark: As every member of this House is aware, small businesses are the backbone of the economy in our ridings. That's why I'm always so proud to help these hard-working men and women celebrate a grand opening or mark an anniversary.

I rise today to pay tribute to a trio of businesses from my riding that have been honoured recently.

Jim Kafenzakis, owner of Luna Pizzeria in Brockville, will be celebrated as business person of the year at the

upcoming Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce Awards of Excellence on November 4. This family-run restaurant has served patrons in Brockville for 40 years.

In Augusta township, the winner of the business of the year at the municipality's first-ever business awards luncheon was Finucan's General Store and Supply in North Augusta. Finucan's has been a fixture in the village for nearly a century, and for the past 46 years has been operated by Jim and Betty Finucan.

On the same day, in neighbouring Elizabethtown-Kitley township, Atlas Block was saluted as business of the year at their 16th annual awards event. Owned by Don Gordon since 1989, the concrete block manufacturing firm employs 35 people.

Running a small business is certainly not an easy way to make a living. I want to offer my congratulations to these outstanding entrepreneurs in my riding of Leeds-Grenville.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rose earlier today to raise in this House to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines a situation that I just found out about last spring that needs addressing.

I want to say upfront, I'm hopeful that the minister is actually going to address this issue, because we've had conversation and it would appear that he's trying to do his best to get the staff and the people at the ONTC to raise this issue and resolve it.

Here's the issue: Ontario Northland, as you know, is owned by the people of Ontario through the government of Ontario. That particular railway runs two trains: one from Cochrane down to Toronto and back, called the Northlander; and another one that runs from Cochrane up to Moosonee. If you, as a citizen, were to go to Toronto and buy a ticket to go, let's say, to Cochrane, Timmins or anywhere in between, you can purchase the ticket and know that if you miss your train, like any other travel agent and any other mode of transportation out there, your ticket is good for 12 months. But if you happen to live up in Moosonee and you're trying to get on what is called the Polar Bear or the Little Bear and you want a train from Moosonee to Cochrane, if you buy that ticket and you miss your train, not only have you missed your train, but you can't use that ticket because it's null and void. In other words, you can't get your money back and you can't travel within those 12 months.

The minister has told me sort of privately that he's trying to resolve this issue, and I take him at his word. I look forward to the day that the citizens of Moosonee and Moose Factory are going to be treated with the same respect as everybody else in this province.

JOHN RILEY

Mr. Mike Colle: This Saturday I had the honour of joining members of my community, along with Con-

stable Ojo from 13 division, to honour a great Canadian, Mr. John Riley.

Mr. Riley was honoured for being the oldest black resident in the area and for being one of the first black men to join the Canadian Armed Forces. Mr. Riley also believes he was the first black electrician to be licensed—like the member from Timmins—James Bay, who I think is an electrician.

John Riley has been a lifelong resident of the Vaughan Road area in Toronto and attended Vaughan Road Collegiate, where he was an incredibly great football player. He now lives on Jesmond Avenue in the same house he was born in 88 years ago.

It was an honour and a pleasure to present Mr. Riley with an honorary scroll marking this special occasion.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Riley was united with a friend of 60 years ago. Mr. Riley had worked with this friend and had not seen him in 60 years. They saw a picture of his friend on a storefront in the community. In the photo was a young John Riley, a good friend he had lost touch with and whom he believed had passed away. Thrilled to have found each other after 60 years, the two men had an emotional reunion, only to find out they'd been living one block away from each other for years and had never crossed paths.

John Riley is a great Canadian, a great electrician, a great football player and a great member of our community. Hats off to John and his 88 years of great life.

MARJORY LEBRETON

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is an absolute pleasure and honour to be able to rise today to celebrate one of my constituents, Senator Marjory LeBreton. This past Sunday at the Nepean Museum, Senator LeBreton was inducted into the Nepean Museum for her hard work and dedication to Canadian public life. She's often regarded by many of us in the Progressive Conservative Party and the Conservative Party in Ottawa as the senior member of the party, but more than that, I feel honoured to have known her for the past 10 years and to have watched her become Canada's most powerful female politician as the leader of the government in Stephen Harper's cabinet.

1510

I brought my little girl to that induction because I think it's important for young girls to have role models such as Senator LeBreton. I was so happy I did. My daughter was thrilled to be there to see the great legacy that this trail-blazing pioneer from Nepean, who now lives in the other end of my riding at Manotick, has done for our province and our country. She has served on campaigns for John George Diefenbaker, Robert Stanfield, Joe Clark, Brian Mulroney, Jean Charest, as well as for the current prime minister, Stephen Harper. Her work has been recognized by Prime Minister Harper by making her Canada's first Minister of State for seniors and certainly as his most capable leader in the government Senate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity. I want to congratulate Senator LeBreton for a great career in public service.

EAST NORTHUMBERLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's my great pleasure to rise today to boast about our local high school in my hometown of Brighton in the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. This school and the community took on the quest of raising money to completely rebuild a track and sports field at East Northumberland Secondary School, or ENSS, as we call it.

As part of their fundraising efforts, they entered the TSN Kraft challenge. They won the competition against Elmvalle, which awarded them not only a \$25,000 cash prize but the opportunity to host a live TSN SportsCentre broadcast as part of the Kraft Celebration Tour.

On August 28, co-anchors Jennifer Hedger and Dutchy took the stage at King Edward Park for a live broadcast of SportsCentre Saturday, and they were just as entertaining in person as they are on TV. Thousands of people joined the ENSS celebration at the park. TSN and Kraft offered a full dose of fun for the whole family at King Edward Park. I even had an opportunity myself to flip and serve over 2,000 burgers and hot dogs to this excited crowd.

I would like to recognize Eleanor Guenette, Brian Todd, Tim Larry, Claude Thompson and Pam Mitchell. They should be congratulated for their leadership with the project. At last count, the committee had raised \$612,000, just shy of their \$850,000 goal.

I couldn't be more proud of this community, the people I call my friends and neighbours, and the place I call home.

HUMAN PAPILLOMA VIRUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Each year some 500 women in Ontario are diagnosed with cervical cancer. Almost 150 will die from this disease. Through Ontario's human papilloma virus, or HPV, vaccination program for grade 8 girls, we are preventing future cases of cervical cancer. Each year, some 77,000 eligible grade 8s can participate in the program.

Some 135,000 females have participated in the vaccine since 2007, which is delivered as a school-based program, administered by the public health units. The virus that the vaccine immunizes against increases a woman's risk of cervical cancer from 20 to 100 times. It is often a silent infection because many people with HPV will show no signs of infection.

Vaccination against HPV is voluntary. It is important that grade 8 students and their parents are aware that this vaccine is available. Cervical cancer week highlights the hard work that physicians and health care professionals do to improve access to and to encourage women to obtain pap tests. It raises awareness of cervical cancer

and reduces the unnecessary deaths of our daughters, sisters and mothers, whose lives are cut short by this devastating disease.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: It's my pleasure to recognize a very important time in the health care calendar. This week is Long-Term Care Week. It is an important time for all of us to recognize the hard work and dedication of the staff, volunteers and patients in the long-term-care sector.

The Long-Term Care Homes Act was proclaimed this summer, which is all about leadership and governance for quality. It's about putting the residents first. We are now using clinical guidelines and best practices in a way that measures results in quality improvement, as any quality improvement tool should.

The McGuinty government has made tremendous strides in providing the proper care to long-term-care residents. In conjunction with our local health integration networks, we are funding 6,100 new full-time staff, including 2,300 nurses who are delivering 12 million more hours of hands-on care. More importantly to the constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, we've opened over 8,300 new long-term-care beds and we are adding another 1,690 beds in communities across the province by 2012. As a result, in the past year, Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital lowered its alternate-level-of-care beds from a high of 16 to a low of zero.

But there's always more to be done. We are rebuilding 35,000 beds over the next 10 years to better serve the needs of residents.

I'd like to thank all the hard-working staff and volunteers throughout the province for providing exceptional care for Ontarians as we celebrate Long Term Care Week.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. David Oraziatti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on teletriage health services from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As Chair of the public accounts committee, I am tabling this report today in response to section 3.13 of the Auditor General's 2009 annual report, which was presented in December 2009. This report deals with the auditor's findings with regard to Telehealth Ontario and the telephone health advisory service. There are three main findings that the auditor put forward in his report.

First of all, the use of Telehealth is declining. One would have thought that, if anything, the use of a health care service would be increasing rather than declining. The reason behind the decline in the use of Telehealth has been really attributed to the fact that most people don't know the connection; they don't know what the number is. Therefore, one of the recommendations of the committee to the ministry is that they report back to us on analysis and state whether it supports the introduction of an 811 number, which they have in other provinces across Canada, and provide information on associated issues, including costs and cost-savings implications.

The second criticism he had was with regard to what it was costing us per Telehealth call. Our costs were, I believe, in the neighbourhood of about \$39 per call, as opposed to other provinces, which were almost half of that cost. The report from the committee asks the Ministry of Health to look at these particular costs, look at the contract that they have with the private provider of this, and report back to the committee on what they're intending to do with regard to this large discrepancy that occurs.

The third problem that was identified by the Auditor General was the fact that when Telehealth called physicians to go and visit a particular patient in their geographic area, only about 85% of the physicians were responding to that request, even though family health teams take that as an obligation in the formation of their family health team. Our committee made recommendations to the Ministry of Health in order to have 100% response, because it was felt very strongly that when the Telehealth operator recommended that this action be taken that the person calling, the person in distress, not be left, waiting for a physician who would never come.

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So, this report is very important to Ontarians. We believe that if Telehealth was in fact increased and improved, if the usage of it was increased and the service was improved, we would take stress off of our hospital emergency rooms and this would be good overall for our health care system.

With that, I'd like to adjourn the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 26, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We move that, notwithstanding standing order 60(c), the Standing Committee on Estimates shall consider the estimates of the Ministry of Health before the estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; and

That the Standing Committee on Estimates be authorized to present its report, pursuant to standing order 63(a), no later than Wednesday, November 24, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I rise in the House today during Small Business Month to pay special tribute to Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses and owners for the significant contributions that they make to our economy year-round.

Small businesses across the province generate the lion's share of net new jobs and help grow and stabilize the economy. That's been critical in the face of global economic downturns from which we are now emerging. Small and medium-sized enterprises employ approximately 2.9 million people, representing more than half of all of the private sector jobs in Ontario. There are more than 379,000 small and medium-sized employer

businesses in Ontario, and they account for approximately \$245 billion in annual economic activity.

To help these businesses through the economic recovery process, our government has developed and is putting into action a comprehensive plan and policies to help Ontario small businesses prevail in today's economic environment. That's why, on July 1 of this year, Ontario implemented tax reforms that will save businesses more than \$500 million a year; that's just the paperwork cost alone. We've permanently cut the small business corporate income tax rate from 5.5% to 4.5% and we've reduced Ontario's general corporate income tax rate to 12% from 14%, effective this past July. The general rate will be further reduced to 10% on July 1, 2013. Imagine: A combined corporate income tax rate—federal, provincial—of 25%, giving us one of the most comprehensive and competitive tax rates in any jurisdiction we compete against in North America.

In total, the government is providing \$4.5 billion in business tax relief over three years that will lower business costs, enhance Ontario's competitiveness, support growing small businesses and ultimately, and most importantly, create jobs here in Ontario.

This week, more than 615,000 Ontario businesses will receive transition payments, between \$300 and up to \$1,000, as they adapt their point of sale and accounting systems for the harmonized sales tax.

We're also working to create faster, smarter and more streamlined government-to-business services. I'm very proud that this government's Open for Business Act passed this past Thursday. This act contains more than 100 amendments that will offer a range of improvements, such as making it easier for professionals like internationally trained engineers to work in Ontario by removing the citizenship and permanent residency requirements for a professional engineer's licence.

As a government, we recognize that we can do more to protect the public interest without creating unnecessary barriers to business. Through reducing the regulatory burden in Ontario, we're helping entrepreneurs and business owners to focus on what they do best: creating jobs for Ontario families.

We consulted extensively with clients and partners representing businesses, labour, and environmental, agricultural and professional organizations to develop the Open for Business Act. The legislation is being hailed by members of the business community for improving Ontario's economic climate. In fact, the Ontario vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Satinder Chera, said, "Whenever the government can reduce the regulatory hoops and hurdles that a small business has to face, that is a good thing. We think the Open for Business Act is a step in the right direction and look forward to working with government to continue creating the right conditions for the job-creating small business sector to succeed."

Our government provides many supports to small businesses. We offer a range of programs and services that help entrepreneurs establish and grow their busi-

nesses right across the province, with offices right through every region of Ontario.

In closing, I'd welcome this opportunity to extend official greetings and congratulations to Ontario's small business owners and operators. Our government continues to work with this sector to create the best possible environment for entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses, to innovate and create jobs.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to recognize this week as ESL Week. ESL Week is an annual celebration of English-as-a-second-language education that's supported by the McGuinty government, our communities, thousands of ESL instructors, learners and many learning institutions and school boards.

Newcomers come to Ontario with big dreams for themselves and for their families: dreams of a new life, a better life in a vibrant and prosperous and open Ontario. Newcomers arrive here with the education, the skills and the desire to contribute to our collective prosperity, and 70% of them have post-secondary education. That's important as Ontario transitions to a knowledge-based economy. As our population begins to retire, Ontario's labour force will increasingly rely on immigration in order to drive our economy. These are all reasons why we must continue to do all that we can to help our newcomers succeed.

Our experience has shown that one of the greatest barriers to our newcomers' success is limited English- or French-language ability. Even with the experience and education, a newcomer can't find a job without essential language skills. That's why our government is working with 38 Ontario school boards to deliver free English- and French-as-a-second-language training programs. In 2010 alone, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$65 million to help more than 120,000 newcomers get the language training that they require and need. Since 2006, we have also invested nearly \$10 million to help nearly 8,000 newcomers learn the language of their workplace or their profession. This investment is in addition to the language training Ontario already funds through our bridge training programs.

When language training is available in the workplace, employers also benefit, so it's a win-win situation, and we know that it works. Over the upcoming year, we will continue to work to improve both our ESL and FSL language training programs. We will, for example, introduce a minimum instructor accreditation standard and support these instructors with the training, the tools and the resources that they need. By continuing to improve our language training programs, we invest in the skills of people who are new to this province.

This week we salute both the learners who have benefited from ESL and FSL and also the instructors and the administrators whose hard work helps open doors for our newcomers. To them, I say: Thank you. You are

helping to shape Ontario's future, because when our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

1530

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to respond. I rise today to respond to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on behalf of Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak, who holds the critic post.

Many newcomers to Ontario and Canada arrive with little understanding and comprehension of the English language. Today's newcomers need a variety of tools to assist them in becoming full partners in Ontario's economy. English-as-a-second-language programs are integral to a newcomer's success, and these programs need to respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario communities.

In May, Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak put forth a private member's bill entitled the Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, 2010. The bill would provide a new 10% non-refundable tax credit to eligible employers that arrange for occupation-specific ESL training for their employees. It gives incentives to employers to help newcomers whom they hire down the path towards trades recognition.

Sadly, the McGuinty government has not offered an alternative for improving ESL and encouraging businesses in having a stake in the families who benefit from ESL training. Instead, the Premier and his ministers spend their time offering platitudes while picking fights with the federal government.

New Canadians and newcomers are eager to have their skills recognized so they can help unlock the true potential of this province. And more needs to be done. As Ontario struggles to recover from a recession, a new generation of leadership must do more than the last to tap into the education, energy, skills and experience of the people we draw to our province. That includes helping to level the playing field by providing ESL opportunities that respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario communities.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to respond to the minister's statement on Small Business Month and the Open for Business Act. We salute those small businesses that manage to keep their doors open in the face of a government that's actively working against them.

Ontario families and businesses have learned the hard way over the last seven years that just because this Liberal government brings in legislation and calls it the open for business bill or the good government bill doesn't make it so. The accountability act will not make you accountable. That's why the PC caucus will always stand up for Ontario's small business, call a spade a

spade, and vote against these hapless bills that do nothing to relieve the burden that this Liberal government continues to pile on them.

Here are the real facts: Ontario's economy is shrinking, and it is expected to languish for the foreseeable future. Ontario's inflation rate is a full percentage point higher than the national average. Unemployment remains far above the national average. Welfare rolls are up. Hydro rates are up. If the minister thinks she has done such a great job, then she can explain why what should be up is down and what should be down is up—way up.

In March 2009 the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a 25% reduction in Ontario regulations within two years. That deadline is coming in just five months, yet more than a year and a half later, this Liberal government doesn't even know how many regulations we have in Ontario, let alone create and execute a plan to eliminate a quarter of them.

Yet the BC government has managed to cut its red tape by 42% since 2001. That's the same government, I might add, that brought in the HST, as did we, in July but has a CPI under the national average—a 42% cut in red tape and elimination of 151,000 regulations that bogged down businesses and stripped them of their productivity.

A recent CFIB survey found that 26% of new business owners would not have set up operation in Ontario if they had known beforehand the red tape burden they would face here. This begs the question: How many business owners never bothered to even shop in Ontario once they learned how this Liberal government would bog their efforts down with red tape and take away any competitive advantage they might have?

The minister should pay close attention to my remarks because yesterday's municipal results sent a clear message in this province of change. After seven years, it's clear that this Liberal government cannot change its stripes when those stripes are made up of the thousands of miles of red tape that are killing Ontario's small business. The only change that's going to bring relief to these hard-working small business owners is a change in government in October 2011.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm going to be responding to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and also the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and their statements. I'll start with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Notice that there's no small business in her title, because the first thing I'll say about this government speaking on behalf of small business and to small business is that they have actually shuffled the small business ministry out of the cabinet. There is no such portfolio. That's number one.

Number two, let's talk about the HST. I came to have a press conference here, before the HST was passed, and brought John Kiru and a number of the executive directors of TABIA, which is the Toronto Association of

Business Improvement Areas, who represent about 30,000 businesses in the GTA: about a tenth, almost, of all small business in the province. He came to deliver a message, and his message was extremely clear: 80% of Toronto's small business community is opposed to the HST. And the government wouldn't even meet with him. He represents 30,000 businesses and he couldn't get a meeting.

I noticed that the minister talked about a quote from Satinder Chera from the CFIB. Satinder and I don't agree on everything, I'll be the first to admit, but certainly something we do agree on is how his membership feels about the HST: its impact on the economy, its impact on their clients and its impact on their businesses. And I can tell you that the impact is not good.

Bankruptcies are up. Hydro rates are up. The cherry on the poison sundae, in a sense, is the direct attacks by the McGuinty government on certain classifications of small business. We remember the direct attack on small, independent butcher shops, for example—it happened a couple years ago and drove them out of business—and the direct attack on pharmacists, independent pharmacists, many of whom wrote petitions that we read out in this House day after day after day—direct attacks.

Are they friends of big business? Absolutely. Are they friends of small business? Absolutely not. Remember, tax breaks are only good if you make a profit, and might I say that it's the rare small business right now in Ontario that's making a profit. They're hanging on by their fingernails through the recession. That's what they're doing, and yet they supply 90% of the employment in this province.

The McGuinty government should be ashamed, absolutely ashamed, of the way that they've messed up the small business file and the way that they haven't addressed it, and the arrogance with which they act towards small business, refusing to even meet with their representatives. Appalling is what it is. It's a lose-lose situation.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This leads me to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Talk about lose-lose: If you're an English-language learner in the city of Toronto, for example, or in Ontario—it's worse here—you will know that 26% of English-language elementary schools with 10 or more ELL students have no ELL teacher. That's over a quarter of schools that have up to 67% of ELL learners, and this is an increase from 22% last year. So under the McGuinty government, the situation is getting worse for English-as-a-second-language learners in our schools. It's there; it's in black and white. If they want to read more about it from the People for Education annual report, they will get all the details.

I draw your attention to the fact that organizations—wonderful, venerable organizations like CultureLink—have to beg, hat in hand, for funding from this government; that last weekend, when His Holiness the

Dalai Lama came to Toronto, the federal government anted up \$3 million to the building of that cultural centre. What did we get from the McGuinty government? Zero, nothing, despite repeated attempts from the entire membership of the Tibetan cultural centre for help from the provincial government—nothing. The feds stepped up, but the McGuinty government was absolutely absent on that file.

So again, I would like to say that on both files it's been lose-lose, both for small business and for those who would want to learn English as a second language in this province. Sad times. The times, they are a-changing, however, as we see from yesterday's results. I extend to both those groups, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party, the hope that we will certainly do better.

1540

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I've received more petitions to do with "Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)." The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this petition.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a large number of petitions that have been sent to my office, as they say, after the fact, but nonetheless I will present them. They are from Muskrat Dam and many other First Nations communities from up north, and they say the following:

"Petition—protect our homelands:

"We oppose Bill 191 and call on Ontario to withdraw it. It violates the treaties and disrespects First Nations' jurisdiction. It is not a true partnership. It imposes a massive, interconnected protected area over Nishnawbe

Aski Nation (NAN) homelands without any compensation;

"NAN communities will make the final land use decisions. Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect treaty number 9 and treaty number 5 and First Nations' inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require free, prior and informed consent of NAN First Nations;

"NAN First Nations will continue to work on local, community-driven land use planning initiatives based on NAN jurisdiction;

"We call on all interested parties, including environmental organizations and industry, to withdraw their support for Bill 191. Bill 191 fails to uphold the Premier's promise of a new relationship with First Nations and new jobs and economic benefits for northern Ontario;

"If Bill 191 passes, NAN will not recognize it. NAN will oppose Bill 191 by any means necessary."

I have a number of petitions to this effect.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save medical laboratory services in Stayner, Tottenham and Elmville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'll be reading a petition designed to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

Of course I agree with this; it's my bill. I'm proud to affix my signature and I'm going to give it to Nicholas to be delivered to the table.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a number of petitions here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the Administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I will pass this on to Jonathan for the desk.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a number of very concerned Thornhill residents, which reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it and give it to page Haadiyah.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, yet more petitions, this time from Sandy Lake in regards to Bill 191. Again, you get these petitions when you get them and you read them when you've got them. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we oppose Bill 191, the Far North Act, and call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw it;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Bill 191 violates the treaties and disrespects our jurisdiction. It imposes a massive interconnected, protected area over our homelands without any compensation. It splits our northern First Nations from our southern First Nations.

"Ontario has an obligation to honour and respect our treaties and our inherent jurisdiction. All development and protection decisions within NAN territory require free, prior and informed consent of NAN First Nations.

"We call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately withdraw Bill 191 and, instead, initiate a respectful government-to-government dialogue with NAN First Nations."

I've signed the petition and I'm passing this on to Priscile to give to the table.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today that was submitted to me by Mr. Vern Orr, who lives on Hatfield Crescent in Peterborough, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition and give it to the page Kimberly.

1550

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora

MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with the petition, will sign it and send it to the table with Marie-Josée.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to thank Walter C. McDonald from Iroquois, Ontario, in my riding for providing me with this petition, and it reads as follows:

“Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment.”

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA for the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I have affixed my name to this and send it down with Bridget.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on this particular bill both from the perspective of our caucus, the positions that we have taken in regard to pension reform, and also as somebody, like everybody else in this Legislature, who has worked hard all of their life and looks forward to one day being able to have the benefit of some retirement benefits when you retire.

Let me start off with that point. We know that in the province of Ontario, two thirds—I repeat, two thirds—of people are going to be retiring with little or no pension whatsoever. We have to ask ourselves a question as

legislators: Is that a good thing? I think the answer, resoundingly, is no.

Clearly, what we want in the province is that if people are going to go to work in the morning and are going to decide to embark on whatever career or to move from job to job, whatever it might be, then after 30 or 35 or 40 years, even, of service to our economy through various employers or a single employer, people who work should have the benefit of a pension. I look at our pages here, and I'm sure that you're all excited about pension legislation because you know that one day you will work, and you want to know that at the end—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They look very excited. I'm looking for smiles now, smiles about pensions, pages. I got some over there. There we go. Some of the pages got it.

You want to know that if you work a period of time, you're going to be able to retire with some dignity when it comes to the ability to do what's important when you come out of the workplace and retire with enough income.

We are seeing more and more an onslaught of employers that are attacking private pension plans in this province. We saw, for example, with Vale Inco in Sudbury, the mean and nasty strike of over a year where the employer decided that they were going to make the number one issue for the workers at Vale Inco a reduction in benefits when it comes to pensions. They proposed and eventually got, unfortunately, a provision that said all new employees going to work for Vale Inco would not be entitled to the same defined benefit plan that every other worker at Inco has got and won by way of strikes some 25 or 30 years ago. We see it in places like Vale Inco. We see it in places like Xstrata, which used to be Kidd Creek. We see from all kinds of employers in the province that there has been, for the last 15 or 20 years, a move on the part of employers to remove pension benefits that workers have worked hard to negotiate within their collective agreements. What we end up with is a situation where less and less employees in the unionized sector are able to hold on to the defined pension plan.

For those of us out in the private sector, and the public sector even, who are not lucky enough to be unionized, there's probably no benefit when it comes to pension benefits other than maybe some RRSPs. Maybe the employer says, "Well, I'll give you \$1,500 or \$2,500 a year by way of an RRSP so that you can build up your own pension plan by way of RRSP for when you retire." All of us in this House know, because that's the system that we work under—we have RRSPs, more than \$2,500 a year, I think. We get \$1,000 a month, I think, as an RRSP, which is far more than anybody else. The point is, you can't build a retirement income on a contribution of \$2,500 a year. You just can't do it. You can hardly build a retirement income even on \$1,000 a month unless you're throwing your own money in on top of that and you're very successful when it comes to income investments that you would have within the market.

So what are we to do? I think we have to ask ourselves a very simple question: Should there be some mechanism to allow all workers in this province—and I say all workers, not just unionized workers, but all workers in this province, including small business people who work hard in this province and get very little in the way of benefits when it comes to the work that they do—to be able to pay into some sort of a pension plan that says, at the end, when you retire, there's going to be some sort of benefit that you can enjoy your retirement on? I think the answer is yes. I think all of us should have that ability to know that, when we come to our retirement age, there's going to be some kind of an income there.

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Currently, what do we have? If you're most of the workers in this province, the two thirds of workers who don't have a pension or have little pension, the only thing you're going to be able to retire on, quite frankly, at age 60 is your Canada pension, if you take a diminished pension at age 60, and that doesn't amount to a heck of a lot. That's five or six hundred bucks a month. Who there is able to retire on \$500 or \$600 a month? You know as well as I do that there are many people in our constituencies who are trying to survive on welfare benefits of \$500 and \$600 a month if they're single. The reality is, most people can't afford to do it, unless you have some supplementary income that you've managed to put away as a result of your own savings. Clearly, Canada pension doesn't cut it when it comes to employees retiring at age 60.

If you say to yourself, "You know what? I'm going to wait until age 65, and I'm going to take a full CPP pension at the time of retirement and I'm going to take my old age pension," that amounts to about 1,700 bucks a month. Now, 1,700 bucks a month is much more interesting when it comes to retirement income, but certainly on its own is not enough to be able to survive. Madam Speaker, you get the phone calls, as I do, from people in your constituency who say, "I own my own house, I've paid all my bills off and I don't owe a dime against my mortgage, and I can't survive on that \$1,700 a month."

The neighbour who lived behind our house on Middleton Avenue—the street over is Bannerman—I'm not going to use her name because she has never given me permission, but about two years ago, unfortunately, her husband died. He was on a Canada pension and a retirement benefit, but there were no survivor's benefits to his widow. When he died, she ended up having to survive on a very small part of his Canada pension, which was the survivor's benefit. She was not 65 years old; she was 62 or 63, and she had not worked long enough to get a full amount out of the reduced pension and the Canada pension. With all of this put together, with her income which was probably about \$1,400 to \$1,700 a month, she had to sell her house because she could not afford to keep her house going when it came to paying the taxes, paying the hydro bill and paying the various utilities. She had no money at the end of the

month to be able to buy groceries and do the types of things that she would like to do in her daily living.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Welcome to Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly. The member from Thornhill says, "Welcome to Ontario." I think you're perfectly right. There are more and more people who find themselves in that position.

So what did she have to do? With tears in her eyes, she said, "I have to sell my house." She said goodbye to all the neighbours, and she moved on to another part of her life where she sold her house and took the equity from the sale of the house to supplement her retirement income. It's like a reverse mortgage but not being able to live in your house. There's something wrong with that picture.

Last week I got a call from a gentleman in South Porcupine. Again, I don't want to use his name because I didn't get explicit permission to use it. The gentleman gave me a call and said, "I'm 58 years old. I made a decision to retire when I was 55 on the basis of where I was at at the time. I looked at my income, I looked at what my costs would be, and I figured I could just about make it and pay my bills. My house is paid, and I've got no bills, no credit cards, and I don't owe anybody any money." As it turns out, he said his municipal taxes have gone up by about \$600 from the time he retired, not because the city of Timmins is trying to be mean and nasty, but because market value assessment has had the effect of raising his taxes. His hydro bill has almost doubled, as has everybody else's in Ontario, as a result of the policies of this government, smart meters and other things that have come along. Then the HST hit, and he had some unfortunate realities in his life where he had to help one of his kids who was having some problems. What does a father do? You help your children. He called me the other day and said, "Gilles, I think I have to sell my house. I'm looking at selling my house and moving into a mobile home, because I need the equity from my house to be able to continue living on an income that's about \$2,000 a month."

The point I'm making is this: If people who have between \$1,600 to \$2,000 a month in retirement income are having to sell their houses, the alarm bells should be going off in the province of Ontario, saying, "What's going on here? Let's fix this."

We need to have modifications to pension legislation, but more importantly, I think we need to be bold in order to move the pension argument forward so that workers are able to build a decent pension for when they retire that is adequate to allow them not huge luxuries, but the ability to retire with some dignity.

There are a couple of ways of going: The Canadian Labour Congress, as all would know, has put forward a very reasonable proposal to Minister Flaherty and Minister Duncan. They said, "Canada pension in this country has to be changed and we need to see a doubling of the benefit that workers get with Canada pension." That sounds pretty radical to some who don't know a lot about pensions, but go take a look at how much you're going to

retire with at age 60, because most people don't wait until age 65, if they have the choice; they retire before age 65, normally in their late 50s or very early 60s. What they're proposing wouldn't be a huge increase. It's a doubling of a benefit of about \$500 to \$600 a month. So adding that together would give you a little bit more money and it would allow you, with your retirement income that you might have put aside, to be able to retire—who knows?—maybe a little quicker with a little bit more dignity.

There was a motion in the House to this effect that was debated earlier this week and last week, and I'm supportive of that motion. However, I don't think that this government, quite frankly, has got it here in their gut to do the fight that needs to be done in order to do what the Canadian Labour Congress is proposing and to double the Canada pension. I don't think this government's prepared to do that. Yes, they're saying all the right things when it comes to the motion in the House, but what action is the Minister of Finance taking with the federal Minister of Finance in order to make that a reality? Ontario could do it. Ontario, as Quebec has done with their Quebec pension plan, could do something quite innovative when it comes to increasing the benefit you get from what is now known as the Canada pension plan.

The other option, and I think it's a very reasonable option, is to follow the path set out by New Democrats under Andrea Horwath. Andrea Horwath has proposed that Ontario step out on its own. Yes, keep the Canada pension plan, and if the federal government is not prepared to do the kinds of increases in the Canada pension that we think are important, create our own Ontario pension plan that is a voluntary system that people can contribute to in order to build the income they're going to need when they retire.

Some would say it should be mandatory. I understand that argument, but you have to always take the first step to get to the second step, and I think what we have proposed as the New Democratic caucus is a very bold but a very practical solution to moving this along the way to getting to where we want to go. If we're able to make the argument that in the end, an Ontario pension plan that's similar to the CPP and that's stackable is a way to go—in other words, one benefit adds to the other—I think it brings us a lot closer to developing a type of pension in this province that allows all workers to benefit and to be able to retire with some dignity.

I know there are those out there who would argue, "You know what? It's your responsibility to save for your retirement." I've heard that argument from members of the Conservative caucus and certainly members of the Liberal caucus, but I want to test the House. How many members of this Legislature out of 107 have really put away for their retirement? I would argue that we're no different in this House than the rest of the population of Ontario, because most people don't for a very simple reason: They can't afford to. They're trying to raise their kids, pay the mortgage, buy diapers, put their kids through school and do the day-to-day things that we have

to do as parents, and they don't have the money. Members of this Legislature, even with our incomes of a base—what's our base? About \$110,000 or \$120,000, whatever it is. Even at that income, we're having a hard time trying to put away for our pensions.

I look at my daughters: Julie, who is married to Chris, both of whom are professionals. She's a nurse practitioner; he's a teacher. I don't know the math, but they've got to be making between the two of them \$140,000 or \$150,000 a year, I would think. I look at my youngest daughter Natalie, and Shane—same with them: They're both professionals and they're probably making a little bit less than that but certainly over \$100,000 a year. I know that they're putting money aside to buy themselves some retirement income when they retire, but if they were to retire strictly on what they're saving today, it would not be enough to provide them with retirement when they each reach age 55 or 60. So clearly something's got to be done.

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Even those families such as my two daughters—our two daughters, I should say; Murielle and I—are doing everything that they can to save up for retirement. Even those who do put it away are not going to have enough to retire with. So it becomes a societal problem. I would say to the government across the way and I would say to my friends in the Conservative Party, who certainly have a different take on pensions than I do—they don't even believe there should be a guaranteed—what do they call it?—a guaranteed income—the one that insures pensions.

Mr. Norm Miller: We created it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yeah, I know. But you guys have been talking against it. You might have created it. Listen: The Tories have created all kinds of legislation while in power, pushed by New Democrats and others, but it doesn't mean to say they still support it, because I've heard the speeches in this House where they're saying, "Do away with it."

My point is this: It is a societal problem. It is a problem that we should not strictly put on the backs of employers because many employers, like workers, are not able to afford pensions paid for strictly by them. So I think that government has got to be part of the solution. Who is government? It's all of us: It's the workers, through the taxes that we pay; it's the employers, by way of the taxes they pay; it's all of us pulling together in order to try to devise a solution that, at the end, will allow workers at age 55 or 60, after 30 years of work, with some retirement income that they can go off on and do what needs to be done. Does that make sense? I think, absolutely, because if we keep people in the workplace far longer than they need to—we know we have a shrinking economy. We look around at what's happening with globalization. If the older dogs—older dogs, meaning myself—stay in the workplace much longer than we have to, we're not allowing the younger people to get into those jobs that we are now currently holding. I think it's perfectly healthy to say to people in their 50s and 60s, when they're ready—it shouldn't be mandatory—

"Here's an option. There's a retirement that you can take, and here's some income that you can go off on and retire." So, between Canada pension, an Ontario pension plan and whatever other investments that you put together, you're able to retire with some dignity. I think that's a good public policy on the part of all.

Here's the question: Should retirement income be strictly a problem for the private sector to solve? I think the answer is no. I think the private sector, yes, has to play a role, but I think the public sector—meaning we, the people; I don't mean the government, like school boards and hospitals, but I'm talking about "we, the people"—becomes important for us to all pull together towards a solution that allows us to build the kind of retirement income that people need to have when they retire.

I think that what our leader, Andrea Horwath, has put forward in regard to the Ontario pension plan is a great step forward towards moving to a day when there is a portable pension, where people are able to contribute to a portable pension that they bring with them from workplace to workplace so that, after 30 or 35 years of work, they're able to retire with some dignity in the end when it comes to that decision to leave the workplace.

As for the legislation that the government has put forward on Bill 120, I just want to say: Will I be supporting it? Yes. Is it exactly what I want? Absolutely not. Is it doing the type of thing that I think need to happen? No. But there are some parts of this bill that I can support. Overall, is this bill going to be the panacea that allows all workers to retire with dignity? Members in the opposition, as well as members of the government, know: absolutely not. There are some things in this particular bill that I think are a step in the right direction. When we deal with the issue of targeted benefits, I think it's a step in the right direction. Does it go as far as we need to? Absolutely not, but it's a step forward. When we look at optional benefits that workers are able to negotiate, it gives them the ability to go there. I think that's a positive step forward. The funding requirements in regard to pension plans being jointly sponsored, I think is a step in the right direction.

Contribution holidays: You flunk on that one. You've tried to do the Liberal thing, which is to fall on the fence. You're neither with them nor against them. So I think the Liberals have tried to play that one very cute, and I think that contribution holidays are certainly not what I would like to see in legislation, but it is a move from what was there originally. But it certainly does not give the bold-stroke move that I think needs to be done on contribution holidays.

On entitlement to surplus: absolutely not. If it was only for that, I would vote against the legislation, because the whole issue of entitlement to surplus is a real issue. Should an employer be allowed to take the surplus out of the plan? I take a very clear position, as all New Democrats have for a while, and that is: When you negotiate benefits, those are deferred income, and it is not for the employer to spend the money that I have invested as a

worker along with my employer into a pension. That money should be used for the benefit of workers, not strictly for the benefit of the employer.

Overall, Bill 120 is a step in the right direction. Does it fix all the problems? Absolutely not. Would I do more? I can tell you under Andrea Horwath and New Democrats that certainly we would do more than what is proposed in this bill. I just say to the members across the way, you will get our support, but don't look at it as being tacit support of what you have done wholeheartedly, or not—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make some comments on the member's presentation here this afternoon. He really did capture a lot of the essence of survival in this day and age when it comes to pension plans, the various types of plans that exist today—and they are varied—and the challenges that people face in an ever-changing world when it comes to pensions.

He also described the various ages that people can and do retire at. In the past, there was a notion that people did not retire until they were 65 or more. At one time, there were no pensions, so people just continued to work throughout their whole life. But now, we see people who have plans that can afford them the opportunity to perhaps retire in their early 50s. I have acquaintances actually from high school who retired 10 years ago or more and that pension was there for them.

Now the question is, in this ever-changing world, will that pension be there for people in the future? That's what Bill 120 is trying to address. We're trying to implement almost 40 recommendations in this second round of bills on pension reform from the Expert Commission on Pensions. So we'll have about two thirds of the 142 recommendations of that report put in place, should this bill happen to pass.

The member talked about this being a good start and gives his support for the bill, which is good to hear, but he mentions that it is just a beginning in his mind, and that's fair for him to say that. But there will be remaining recommendations from that report that we would consider for inclusion in future reforms.

We've had one bill on pensions; this is the second one. The finance minister has indicated that there could be another one yet. So I appreciate his comments on this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaking as a person who is himself about eight years beyond Freedom 55—and, may I also mention, without any defined benefit pension plan, because people out there think we have one here and we don't. I am not speaking from an elevated position when I comment either on the general question of pension benefits or on the comments of my friend from Timmins—James Bay.

This is a problem for the entire world on a variety of levels. We've looked recently at television news and seen rioting in the streets of France. Why are they rioting in

France? Because the French government, not capable of affording pension benefits at age 60, has decided to move them to 62. Would that it were so simple for us here in Canada and Ontario.

I listened with interest to the comments of my friend because, by and large, his general observations are things that I think all sides of the House can agree on. What we can't agree on is the how-to. The problem is, the more the how-to is considered and the more time ticks by, the more problems we have. Because again, speaking as a person my age, and many in this House are my age, and I'm sure many people watching today are my age, we have a difficulty, and that difficulty is—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: No, not you.

We have a difficulty in that we're living longer. We're living to 80, 90 years old, and most people have not had the foresight to think, "Well, I'm going to live that long, and I need to save money." So we have a national problem, we have a provincial problem and we have an individual problem.

It is my belief, and it is our party's belief, that ultimately the answer to this—and it's going to have to be soon—is going to come from the private sector, which has the imagination and the creativity to do this where governments do not. It is an easy solution to say, for example, that we should double the benefits coming out of the Canada pension plan. It's easy to do in terms of legislating it. It's a lot more difficult to do when it comes to where the money's coming from.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I was watching my colleague on the television downstairs because, every once in a while, it's good to see what the public out there sees. It's good to watch the members as they perform and to see how they look on television, how they speak and how they project their voice.

I was watching him, and he had a lot of important things to say. I know that he cares very much about this issue. I know he cares very much about where the government is heading or is not heading on the whole pension scheme plan. We have studied this a great deal in our party. My colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is here, who is a bit of our pension expert. But what Mr. Bisson had to say was particularly—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd just remind the member to refer to the riding.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, excuse me. Exactly, exactly—the member from Timmins—James Bay. We all lapse into that from time to time, especially with the familiarity, but I meant no umbrage. I did not do it in any kind of a negative way.

The member from Timmins—James Bay was talking about a public plan, about the necessity of having governments at all levels contribute to the idea of a successful pension plan so that all Ontarians and all Canadians

can have the kind of pension plan that will do them proud.

We in this country are very proud, I think, of the Canada pension plan. It has had its flaws over the years, but parliamentarians of all stripes have seen the necessity of working towards a universal plan so that a person, when they turn 65 years of age, or younger in certain circumstances, will be guaranteed a full pension. We in the New Democratic Party believe that everyone needs a full pension, and we look forward to a bill that's certainly better than this one and that will produce that in the future. But for the time being, I am in total agreement with my friend from Timmins—James Bay. I commend him for what he had to say and want to tell him that he looked pretty good on television.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes to comment on our friend from Timmins—James Bay. I must say, just as a comment on the comments by the member from the official opposition, that they're more inclined to have the private sector look after this. Yet my good friend from Timmins—James Bay and his party ask if government can take a bigger role. There's a real contrast, and I guess, as we go through this process, hopefully we'll land on something that we can all live with.

I don't have a pension either, and the member from Timmins—James Bay alluded to that. He pointed out to some of us that maybe we didn't do a good job planning. We seem to be too busy making ends meet, and I say that having been self-employed all my life. Some of the equity that we put aside—sometimes it's not easy to trade it in for the dollars that you need to live with.

Do we need to move this process forward? Yes. In well over 20 years, two decades, there hasn't been much thought about pension reform. We kind of left it and left it and left it because we knew back then that—and that's from governments of any stripe, who thought that General Motors would never fail, that Nortel would never fail, that Abitibi Paper would never fail, that those pensions would be there for those folks when they retired. We certainly learned that that is not the case anymore.

As the Minister of Finance has initiated, we passed a bill in the last session that we sat here to make certain steps towards some type of tax reform. This would follow in those footsteps, and I'd hope as we move forward that we'll bring the private sector, the federal government and the provinces together to have a pension plan for all in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins—James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, only two minutes? How can I do so? You just work up a sweat in that time.

I just want to thank all members for the comments made. I think we all recognize in this House that there is

a problem when it comes to retirement income for all Ontarians in this province.

It's true, as was said by the member from—I forget the member's riding.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thornhill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thornhill. Thank you. I know them all by name; I don't know them by ridings. Madam Speaker, I'm at a loss. That's why I would never—

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's the second time you've asked that question.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm not good with riding names, as I just admitted.

But my point is, we all have different approaches to how to fix the problem. The Conservatives, the Liberals and the New Democrats approach it very differently, and that's what healthy debate is all about.

I think our critic, Mr. Miller, has put forward some very good proposals that are well thought out, that have been looked at, have been studied and have been dealt with for a long time. I find it a little bit sad that the government hasn't taken that and run with it to the degree that they should.

One of the members across the way—again, I don't know the riding names so I won't say who it is—Lou—

Interjection: Northumberland.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Northumberland, thank you. See, that's how you cheat, Madam Speaker; you just ingratiate yourself with your colleagues.

He suggested that, "Oh my God, New Democrats were there from 1990 to 1995 and they didn't fix the problem. Oh my God." I've just got to say to you that you've been the government for the last seven years, and it's getting really, really thick on the part of the public to listen to a government that keeps on blaming everybody in the past for all the problems of today. You know as well as I do, sir, that at different times in the political debate of this province, when it comes to issues, some issues are much more pressing than others. Pensions were a very different reality back in the early 1990s but because of the meltdown of the economy and everything else that has happened, this issue has become front and centre. I think the government should reflect and say—if you are the government of Ontario, take the responsibility that comes with being government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to spend some time this afternoon on Bill 120.

I happen to think that we have two large and pressing public issues that it doesn't matter which party forms government, they're going to have to deal with them. One will be the long-term sustainability of our public health care system, and the second one is going to be the provision of pensions for our citizens.

Things have changed dramatically from many, many centuries ago when Otto von Bismarck in Germany decided that he would be a social progressive—and I use that in interesting terms—and that the establishment of the retirement age would be age 65 in Germany. When

one looks at the age of people, the average age of males to survive in Germany, at that time, was around age 40. So Otto von Bismarck, in bringing in 65, realized early on that the state would never have to provide pensions because of the age that people were living until back in that time. We all know that age 65 became the threshold level for retirement for many, many years. We've had debates in this House, and indeed in Legislatures right across Canada, that forcing people at age 65 was deemed to be discriminatory in nature.

It's interesting how the demographic profile has changed for pensions. My wife, who is enrolled in the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, and anybody who's in that plan get a quarterly bulletin about members. It's interesting that in the last bulletin that I read, there were about six teachers retired that were 100-plus; there was a significant number age 90-plus—because they break it down; there was a larger group age 80 and a larger group in their 70s and 60s. What's interesting about that is, if you take a teacher who would be aged 100-plus, who retired at age 65—you do the math: that would be 35 years that they've been drawing their pension. You easily reach the conclusion that their pension that they're drawing at age 100-plus today would be larger than their actual salary that they got when they were working as professional teachers. You just do the math with the indexing factor—teachers' pensions are indeed indexed.

This certainly is an issue that needs a lot of discussion, and I fundamentally believe that there's no party that will have a corner on this. We'll be looking at a whole variety of models to try to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

I know in my own case, I can share a bit of a personal story, which is that my father, who retired after 40 years at General Electric in Peterborough, had a pension that was funded through contributions both by the individual worker and General Electric. In his particular case, because my mother was enrolled in HOOPP because she was a nurse and my father died exactly one year after retirement—in those days there was a provision in there that you would draw one year's of unemployment insurance before your pension kicked in. So my father paid into a pension plan for 40 years and never drew one dollar of that pension plan because he didn't take a survivorship option because my mother was enrolled in HOOPP. People who have looked at pensions know full well that if you opt for the survivorship benefit, the actual pension amount goes down fairly significantly. That's often a factor that is taken into consideration.

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Another thing that was interesting about GE and their pension plan—my father's collective bargaining group was the United Electrical Workers. I remember being a young lad sitting at the kitchen table when this discussion was going on. GE, at that time, had a pension board that was made up equally of members from GE corporate and the union, and they would manage the pension plan. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, GE corporate wanted to remove the union representation on that pension forum, so they came up with the idea that they would fully fund

the pension plan on a go-forward basis. What was interesting in that was to see the dynamic within the collective bargaining unit. The younger workers were getting the opportunity from GE corporate to get a substantial amount of money due to the retroactive contributions that they made. GE corporate said, "We'll give them a cheque." If you were a young person of 25 or 30, you were getting a cheque for \$7,000 to \$10,000—that's great—perhaps to make a down payment on a new home or buy a new car. So there was that internal dynamic between the younger members of the collective group and the older members who were looking forward to keeping that mechanism in place for their retirement income.

As a government, we've certainly indicated that we would be advocating changes to the Canada pension plan, which has an interesting history of its own. Mr. Pearson, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, of the federal Liberal Party, had a thinkers' conference in Kingston, Ontario, in 1960. Tom Kent, who would become Deputy Minister of Finance when Pearson formed the government, was proposing in 1960 to create the pan-Canadian pension plan. Of course, that became a topic of discussion during a number of federal campaigns in the early 1960s. It was implemented by the Pearson government, in close co-operation with—there were five parties during that minority government. Mr. Thompson from Alberta was the leader of the Social Credit Party. Mr. Douglas was leading the New Democratic Party at that time. Réal Caouette was leading the *créditistes* in the province of Quebec. Mr. Diefenbaker was Leader of the Opposition, and Mr. Pearson was Prime Minister. They had to come up with the honourable Canadian compromise, based on specific principles, to put forward the Canada pension plan. Of course, we all know nine out of 10 provinces adhered to the federal CPP regulations. At that time, Mr. Lesage, who'd been a former federal cabinet minister, became Premier of Quebec. Of course, his motto was *maîtres chez nous*, masters of our own house. He was asserting through the Quiet Revolution that Quebec needed additional rights and were asserting those rights, so they came up with the side deal, the QPP, which is exactly the same as the CPP but allowed the government of Quebec to put their stamp on cheques that would be delivered to the province of Quebec respecting provincial jurisdiction.

We're now at a point in time—and all members have talked about this—to come up with changes, of course, to the Canada pension plan, which we all know will require a constitutional amendment, with seven provinces equaling 50% of the population.

I think it's incumbent upon us all to chat with our fellow colleagues in other Legislatures. I fundamentally believe that we need to make some changes to the Canada pension plan, bearing in mind there would be some additional employer contributions, some additional employee contributions and, indeed, the government of Canada—and we want to be cautious, I think. Payroll taxes are a delicate matter and we need to take that into consideration.

I want to take a bit of time today to recommend that all members of this House get a copy of the final report of the Senate's Standing Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce. The Chair of that committee is Senator Michael Meighen. The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette is the Deputy Chair. They have done what I think is a pretty extensive review about Canadians saving for a secure retirement. They have a whole series of recommendations, and I think I'll just make some notes. I'll note the report. They certainly indicate that there is a desperate need for Canadians to start saving more. It has been calculated by TD Economics that most Canadians would like to strive for a retirement income that would represent about 65% of the earnings that they had during their working careers, bearing in mind that if you're enrolled in RRSPs or other financial instruments, one of the things they like to advise people is that as you approach retirement, you pay down your mortgage to make sure it's as close to zero as possible when you retire. They also recommend for any major capital purchases that you may be contemplating, that you make those during the last few years of your working career so that when you get to that moment of retirement, you can survive on 55% to 60% of the income that you had during your active working days.

But what's challenging, of course, is that when you look at many middle-class Canadians today, they do not have the appropriate savings level. When you calculate for those 35% who still have a defined benefit pension plan or the other 65% who have defined contribution plans, we're nowhere near that particular threshold level of 55% to 65% that we need to be at to ensure a level of retirement income.

It's interesting. The Senate committee on banking, of course, had a lot of representations, and one of those they certainly looked at was from David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, who appeared on his own behalf and argued that "the most serious problem with the current RRSP system is that there is a dearth of easily accessible and efficient investment vehicles for individuals and, even worse, a lack of efficient or low-cost annuity vehicles for individuals. In his opinion, he said that "it is important that people have access to investment vehicles that provide reasonable risk-adjusted net returns on their savings during their working years ... but also access to appropriate annuity and other vehicles that provide a lifetime stream of income post-retirement...." He went to say that there are many ways that this can be accomplished, but that it is going to take everybody working together with a variety of models that can be used to achieve a better retirement for Canadians and Ontarians.

Of course, you've seen Gordon Pape on TV. Gordon Pape also appeared in front of Senate banking committee, and one of the things that he talked about—it was mentioned yesterday by the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek in his comments—was the level of fees that are charged for RRSPs. He went on to say:

"In characterizing high cost as a problem facing individual investors, Mr. Pape—an author and publisher—

spoke about mutual fund management expense ratios, which he said 'are significantly higher (in Canada) than they are in the United States.... They significantly erode the returns that investors receive within their RRSPs.' He compared the cost of exchange-traded funds, which may range from 0.2 to 0.55%, to the cost of mutual funds, which are in the 2.5% range, on average, for an equity fund...."

So he did talk about this issue that was chatted about yesterday in terms of the cost of operating some of these funds. He went on to say that there should be some opportunities for a wider pool of funds to be used to significantly reduce the cost of running these plans.

I think Bill 120 is a step forward, and I believe that over the next number of years, there will have to be more legislative initiatives, perhaps 100% implementation of what Harry Arthurs has suggested. But there is no doubt about it, when you contemplate that, in 2017, in the province of Ontario, there will be more people over age 65 than there will be under age 15. So that really indicates the challenge that we all have in terms of adequate retirement incomes.

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Bill 120, if passed, will strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvements. It will provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans, clarification of surplus rules, and provide a dispute resolution mechanism to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surplus should be allocated on the windup.

It would also provide a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by implementing a strategy to build reserves, increase revenues, limit current exposure and reduce risk to taxpayers in the future. It will further strengthen regulatory oversight and improve plan administration.

The member from Mississauga East was so enthralled with my speech, I think he just fell over there.

But you know, it's interesting: Contribution holidays have created great problems for all governments of all political stripes over the last 20 years in the province of Ontario. We've often looked at Stelco and other large companies too big to fail; contribution holidays were given and we know the results that have taken place with those contribution holidays.

One of the ones that occurred when I was a member of city council: OMERS negotiated with municipalities across the province of Ontario. It was effectively known as the OMERS holiday. It allowed municipalities for a number of years to not make contributions—their share—to the OMERS pension plan. It gave employees at the municipal level a holiday. One of the things we have come to realize is that while there was some short-term benefit to municipalities in terms of their fiscal position, we now know it would have been much better if that holiday was not brought in for OMERS, that municipali-

ties across Ontario had continued to make contributions during that period, and, correspondingly, that members of the OMERS pension plan would have continued to make those contributions.

I know, if you chat, and I'm sure you do, Madam Speaker, here in Toronto with those individuals who are employed with the city in Toronto who took advantage of those contribution holidays back in the mid- to late 1990s, certainly, if they had the option today, they would have not had those contribution holidays.

We have done a number of things, I think, to reform pensions in the province of Ontario. In the 2010 budget, we provided a \$500-million grant to stabilize the PBGF fund, which is the pension guarantee fund that was brought in in Ontario in 1980, recognizing that the province of Ontario would indeed be in a position to backstop pensions if a crisis developed. We did that. Talking to the actuarial people who are involved in this—and there was an advisory council on pensions and retirement that was established, along with the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, to help us come up with the need to make that happen.

We all recognize that a financial crisis was initiated on Wall Street through the greed of a wide-ranging number of individuals. I don't think all of us realize how close the whole world came to a financial collapse. There was a great run on financial institutions south of the border. Lehman Brothers was the largest bankruptcy in American history and, of course, we know what impact that had on investment and pension funds right out through the world. It's interesting to note that through that process, the central bank in Iceland actually went bankrupt because their capital base was made up of American subprime mortgages that they had bought 15 or 20 times down the line.

This debate about pension reform in Ontario I believe is an opportunity—I sincerely believe—to engage every person in our communities, because we all have a stake in pension income. So this is a real opportunity for members to be out in their ridings, to engage people in their ridings and to come up with ideas and suggestions that we may want to look at.

While this is not government policy, it's certainly my suggestion that pension reform would be a great topic for a select committee to look at. Having been a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions in the province of Ontario, that was a unique opportunity to look at an area and come up with a series of recommendations. It may be that this is one of those key topics that all members on all sides of the House have a real interest in, retirement income for our fellow citizens, because we know that we're an aging population and we know that to sustain our economy long-term, people are going to have to have a reasonable level of pension income to sustain themselves, to have the opportunity to keep living in the style that they had during their working careers.

This will be an interesting debate. It's a debate where I think all 106 members should take the opportunity to get

their comments on the record because, as I said at the opening of my remarks today, pension reform and the sustainability of health care are our two pressing issues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech of the member from Peterborough on Bill 120, this pension bill. He did speak about the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, and I believe he mentioned that his wife is a teacher and may benefit from that.

There is, in Ontario, a growing disconnect between the private sector and the public sector as it relates to pensions. I will note that with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, there was a line item in this year's budget where there was a \$500-million contribution from general tax revenues to sustain that fund. That's something that most businesses aren't able to participate in. I talked to individual business operators, and in most cases there is no plan. Some small businesses may have a plan where the business will contribute an amount toward an RRSP and the employer will match it, which is actually what we have here at Queen's Park. We have a defined contribution plan.

The private sector world is moving that way, whereas we have in the public sector a case where, in many cases, people are able to retire, with the various factors, in their mid-50s. They may very well live to be 95, so you have a 40- or 45-year period. You may work 30 years and draw your pension for 40 or 45 years. That is, I would say, not sustainable, frankly, and it is a huge disconnect between the private and public sector situations.

But this bill is about making those who have defined benefit plans able to count on them by strengthening the rules, and we have been supporting that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I had the opportunity to speak for a long period of time yesterday about pensions.

I listened to the member from Peterborough, and he made some good points about the money that the government had to put into the pension plan to bolster it. There's no doubt about it, that was helpful. But I would ask anyone—in the government or members—what would you do if you spent 35 or 40 years in a plant and had signed a deal with the employer that, instead of wages, you would take pension credits that, at age 60 or 65, you could use to sustain yourself, to have a good, respectable, normal retirement, and that individual decided at the end of the day to break that agreement? What do people do? They turn to their government. They turn to their government for help. They ask the government to enforce contract law. They ask the government to help them out, because it wasn't their fault that the economy went into a spin. It wasn't their fault there was a world recession. But if the contributions had been kept up over the 35 years without any holidays or without any of the things that would be detrimental to the solvency funding, then that would be an argument, but it wasn't

their fault. So whoever the government of the day is, regardless if it's Liberal, Conservative or NDP, it's our duty to maintain the contract law and force these companies to live up to their obligations to the people who have spent their whole life working for them and given up a good part of their life to bolster their financial situation.

1650

I think it is up to us to be the watchdogs over pensions. I think we have the ability now to do that, and we certainly should take an active role in protecting people's lives in this province who have paid their taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is one of those times where this Legislature is hosting a good debate among thoughtful members about something that's important to all of us, and while we may disagree on some of the details, we all seem to be headed in the same direction.

Here's where we are, roughly: the Canada pension plan is this country's national, mandatory-contribution, public pension system. It does provide a secure, indexed-to-inflation defined benefit pension to virtually all working Canadians, as well as survivor and disability benefits. What we all agree on is that, in and of itself, it's insufficient. In fact, CPP benefits are only intended to replace 25% of a contributor's career-average annual pensionable earnings—which is a mouthful of words that says the amount of money that you need to live on—up to an earning ceiling of \$47,200 in 2010. That's not a lot of money.

Very clearly, what Ontario has said is that we need to have a modest expansion of the Canada pension plan, fully funded and phased in, because if there's one thing that we agree on with both parties opposite, it's that this has got to be responsible.

Secondly, we need to have some pension innovation in the province of Ontario, ideally across Canada, to expand the types of institutions that can offer pension plans. We need to expand the range of working individuals who can participate in a pension plan and we also need to find ways to reduce the cost of pension plans. This is really important, because about two thirds of working Canadians don't have a workplace pension. Providing for a secure future for all 13 million Ontarians, and those yet unborn, is one of the things that our people, our electors, sent us to this Legislature to do for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is quite an interesting debate in the sense that it's what I might call a great push-pull argument. On the one hand, if you take, as an example, a currently much-discussed group—that's the Nortel pensioners—who have a problem because of the disposition of Nortel assets and the disappearance, in effect, of money that they had a right to expect, they're looking for a safety net under the pension benefits guarantee fund. And the pension benefits guarantee fund,

essentially, isn't funded. This bill tries to address that in some degree but doesn't come close to being able to do that for Nortel, much less everybody else who has a claim on it or who ultimately will have a claim on it.

So we're put in a situation where we hear discussion of, "The government will help me." I heard that from my friend the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. The government doesn't help anybody. The government manages money that taxpayers put into a fund or any other thing that that government decides is going to address one issue or another. So our problem is: Do we help people through a pension benefits guarantee fund that doesn't have any money or do we help through welfare, because these people are not going to be set adrift? So we have that problem to reconcile with a bill like this that doesn't go far enough.

I do agree with the member from Peterborough on a number of things that he says. The greying of Ontario is a fact that is irrefutable. I believe the number was 2017, before the largest cohort is over 65. As I mentioned in an earlier comment, the concept of living to 80, 85 or 90 these days is not far-fetched. It is happening much more often than it used to. So the pension discussion is not one that will end with Bill 120; it is one that must go on and on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my colleagues from Thornhill, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Mississauga-Streetsville for providing some commentary.

I'll just give you another statistic which I think is somewhat concerning. TD Economics, in a profile a couple of years ago, was talking about households where the primary earner is between 55 and 64 years of age. Only 65% of that group have an RRSP, and only half of those have more than \$55,000 in those accounts. So when you take what I would call those very sobering statistics into consideration, it becomes quite clear—a real freight train that we're dealing with here.

It will take all of us at our best, I think, over the next number of years to truly come to grips with this pension problem. Will there be one magic solution to this? No. Will there be a combination of approaches? I believe that will be the correct path that will be pursued. It will be an extension of the Canada pension plan. It will be a chance to look at the opportunities for some multi-employer plans in the province of Ontario, where we can significantly reduce the administrative fees that are of concern when some of these plans are initiated and where exorbitant fees are reducing the amount of return. There will be a serious look at the impact of contribution holidays, which have been referenced on several occasions.

I think that this is a real opportunity for us cooperatively to put in place something that's sustainable in the long term.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Beaches-East York.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, I have a fan, I think. I hope I still have the fan when I'm finished speaking.

Applause.

Mr. Michael Prue: And on and on he goes.

I looked at this bill when it first came out, and looked at what was being proposed. Although I really can't find all that much fault with it, I do consider it a very timid piece of legislation. I consider it quite timid in its scope, in what it intends to do and how it's being done.

I am reminded that the phrase I have heard most often, I think, from the government benches, be they Conservative or Liberal government benches, in my nine years here at the Legislature is, "We know there's a lot more to do, but this is a good first step." When I looked at this bill, it rang in my ears, because I think that's what is happening here: The government sees this as a lot more to do, but here's the first step.

I have to say that I am disappointed with the first step, because the Arthurs report was very clear on what needed to be done for pension reform in Ontario. We all know that this is a crying need. We all know that this is a generational issue. We all know that with the number of boomers who are fast approaching 60 and 65 years of age, the need for pension reform is going to be one of those great debates, and that the debate will be very similar in circumstance and scope to the debates of the 1960s around medicare; it will be very much the same as the debates earlier in Canada's history on other social programs. And they are based on a certain timing. They are based on the age and the occupation of people, the number of people who are in the country, from whence those people may come, if it's around immigration issues—a whole lot of stuff.

I look to the experts. I look to what Mr. Arthurs had to say. First and fundamentally, he recognized that the \$1,000 threshold was not sustainable. It is not enough for someone to retire on. It is not enough as a base-floor guarantee to ensure that a person or persons could live without being in poverty. We know that the poverty line for a single person in urban Ontario is approximately \$19,000 a year. Having a guideline, as we have here in the province now, of \$1,000 is tantamount to saying, "You are going to live for the rest of your life in poverty," because if you are a retired person or about to retire, you have no job prospects or reasonable job prospects, and your pension suddenly gets pulled out from under you and you are stuck with the bare minimum of \$1,000, which is the pension guarantee, that simply is not enough to sustain yourself in any kind of lifestyle that you would want.

1700

So Mr. Arthurs was quite right when he suggested that we have to increase that to an amount which is a livable amount per month in order that people not find themselves in poverty. He suggested \$2,500. Just doing the fast math, that would be about \$30,000 a year. It would be not a princely sum but a comfortable one. It would allow even a couple to live above the poverty standard

and to make sure that they were able to maintain themselves in a reasonable style without worrying about the ravages of old age. But this particular bill does nothing about that key Arthurs recommendation. It says nothing about raising the rate from \$1,000 to anything approaching a livable amount.

I listen to the finance minister as often as I can to see where he is going on this and other issues. The government likes to talk about the fact that to allow for solvency under the present \$1,000 per month limit, the premium would have to be raised 500%. When that was first voiced in this House, I thought: Wow; raising the premium 500% just to make sure things were solvent. How could anybody afford that? Then we went out and tried to find out how much people are paying per month right now, and they're paying \$1 per month into this fund. So if you want it to be solvent, if you want it to pay the amount of money it's supposed to, we would have to ask people to pay \$5 a month. That's the 500%. Just to put that into perspective, this is a \$4 increase.

I went and filled up my car with gas yesterday. It took about \$40 worth of gas, and, of course, there was 13% HST on that gas. Just doing the fast math, that was over \$5 right there. And, you know, I needed the gas, just like everybody else who drives a car, and when you have to pay for things in order to have things, you do it. If you were to ask me whether I would rather pay the HST on that \$40 worth of gas or pay an extra \$4 a month to make sure that the pension plan in Ontario was solvent, I would tell you that that is an absolute no-brainer. It is my honest belief that the majority of people, particularly the majority of people in their late 40s and 50s and 60s, who are now starting to be concerned about a pension and their retirement and what is going to happen to them in middle and old age, would think that this is not a lot of money to spend as well. This is \$5.

I'm sorry; I said "per month." I err. That's \$5 per year, not per month.

The minister also says that to implement the full Arthurs recommendation of \$2,500 per year, it would mean a 1,000% increase, but then again, that is but \$10 per year. Most people would think that is a pretty good deal, to pay \$10 a year in order to have a pension plan that is fully vested, that is guaranteed and that if anything, heaven forbid, were to happen to their plan, to the monies that were coming out of it, that \$10 would guarantee at least that they would have a pension of \$2,500 per month.

It was a long time ago when I started paying into a pension plan. I remember in my 20s getting a job with the federal government. There was a pension plan that was mandatory, that all federal civil servants had to avail themselves of. It was not a voluntary plan; it was the plan. And I remember those days, because the majority of the people with whom I worked were young people, fresh out of university. We'd got a job with the immigration department as it was expanding, working in exciting places like the airport and downtown Toronto and dealing with people from all around the world, and it was an exciting job.

I remember that a lot of people with whom I worked were very concerned that they had to pay for that pension plan. They were very concerned because they had to pay 8% of their gross salary. You can imagine, when you are 20-some years old and you were paying 8% of your gross salary every two weeks—and when you only earned, as I did in those days, about \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year, and you were paying—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, that's all. You remember. I see the Speaker laughing.

That wasn't a bad salary. It wasn't a great salary, but that's what it was. And when you were paying 8% of that for 40 years down the road, a lot of people didn't like it. I remember the discussions that we often had about how we would rather keep that 8%, how we would rather keep those 600-or-so dollars a year in our own pockets, about how we would look after ourselves when we were older. I remember those discussions, but there was no option to that. There was no option at all, because you paid and you continued to pay and you paid for the entire time that you were a public employee.

I also know that today when I talk to the same colleagues that I worked with nearly 40 years ago—and the majority of them are now retiring or contemplating retirement—they are very happy with that pension plan. They are very happy because they understand that it was necessary, for 30-plus years, to pay into that pension plan, to put in the 8%. Today, they have secure pensions.

I would wonder: If the government of Canada were to turn around one day and say, "We're not solvent; you can't have that pension plan," or, "We're going to change the law on something that you have paid into your entire working life, and you're not going to have that plan anymore," methinks there would be a riot of public employees, because that was part of deal with where we worked. Everybody understood that as public employees, we did not make as much money as people doing comparable jobs in the private sector. Almost everyone with whom I went to university, almost everyone I knew, went off to work in the private sector with the same or lesser qualifications than I, and they earned more money. But it was the pension plan, working for a government or working for a large corporation, that was the difference. Today, it seems to me to have been one of the wisest decisions that was made on behalf of federal public employees and employees in general, those who worked for larger corporations that were able to put the money aside and were able to give some kind of future to people in their old age.

I do remember my own father, who worked at a place called Dunlop's on Queen Street. It was a conveyor belt factory—a dirty, stinking, horrible place. I know that because I had the opportunity to work there for four or five summers myself, to see people with all kinds of infirmities because of losing hands and feet on the conveyor belts and machinery; people who died prematurely and oftentimes didn't make their 65th birthday to get their pension. There was a pension, albeit a small one,

and I do remember that when that factory shut down, the pensioners and the people who worked there were not well done by with that pension plan, because it was not indexed and because they were given an option—and too many of them took it—of taking a cash settlement and walking away, because the Dunlop-Pirelli company had closed down, semi-bankrupt, in Canada. It was a pretty sad time for most of those men—and most of the people with whom I worked were men. It was an incredibly sad time, and their pension did not benefit them, even though they had worked in a pretty bad place.

1710

I think that all Canadians, all Ontarians, deserve a full pension. I have listened to some of the arguments that are being made in this place, some people talking about defined benefit versus defined contribution, but we all know that a real pension is one that you get every month. A real pension isn't like what we get here as a member of the Legislature; I don't consider that a pension at all. It's not a pension at all; it's a forced saving scheme. I'm glad that someone forces me to save some of my money, but the pension that has accrued or that I see accruing to me after nine years in the Legislature is not yet one year's salary, not yet. But I guess I live in hope that at one time it may be.

We support the Arthurs recommendations, all of them. We support the Ontario pension agency. We believe that the pooling, administering, investing and disbursing of stranded pensions would be an important role for the agency, and we were disappointed to see that this was not in this legislation. Again, this legislation is very timid. But if it were in the legislation, if it were to be part of a great Liberal plan, such as other great plans in the past when governments got together and came up with medicare and other things that are universally appreciated in this country, then the Ontario pension agency would solve the problems that Nortel pensioners face, Nortel and AbitibiBowater and Canwest Global Communications. They would all be much better off.

We also think that the third Arthurs recommendation about emergency indexation provisions is something that should be studied and something that should be done, and unfortunately, again, it has not found itself within the four walls of this legislation.

In the five minutes left, I do want to talk about the more than 60% of Ontarians who have no pension. What they have is a Canada pension when they turn 65; that is all they have. That is all they can look forward to. Very often, they did not have times in their professional or personal lives to put away the kind of money that would make sure that they do not live in poverty. Sometimes because they didn't have good jobs, sometimes because the jobs in the cyclical runnings of the economy did not allow for them to save, and sometimes because of family obligations, they never did get an opportunity to have a pension.

This is particularly true of women, who oftentimes in the past—more so than today, but even still today—were the ones who stayed home, were the ones who looked

after the children, were the ones who were in my day, in my younger day, called homemakers. They didn't have the opportunity to accrue that kind of pension, and I want to talk about them.

We think that more needs to be done, and that more cannot be just a modest increase in the CPP, which I think is where this government is heading. A modest increase in the CPP will of course be welcomed by anyone who only has that as a source of income, but we could do so much more. There are places around this globe that have much more vibrant pension plans, where people do not look at turning 60 or 65 years of age as a time of penury. They do not look upon poverty; they look upon it as a time to fulfill those things in their lives that they have always wanted to do: to go back to school, to travel, to spend time with children, to take up art, to do all of those things that one can and should be able to do in retirement. We believe that this is what a really good pension plan would do. Certainly, we would like to follow what some of those countries have done, but we need to make sure in doing it that there are sufficient monies available to fund it over the long term.

We don't think that the issue of expanding the pension coverage is something that is anything other than urgent. We do not believe that the Harper government, not to mention Alberta and some other provinces, is going to move significantly to expand the coverage under the CPP. That is why we have ourselves talked about an Ontario plan.

This is not new. It is not unique. The grand old man of politics in Ontario, Leslie Frost, had the same idea 50 years ago, the same idea that Ontario should have a pension plan. He did not move ahead with that pension plan because the Canada pension plan came in and the Canada pension plan was doing what it was supposed to do. He didn't see the necessity for duplicative effort, and I understand that, and he quietly dropped the plan that he had been a champion of.

But perhaps it's time for us to look at what he thought and what he was prepared to do, because if the other provinces and the federal government are not going to do what's necessary, I would suggest that this province should. We have 13 million people, many of whom are getting older. We have companies that are finding themselves in dire straits and walking away from their obligations. We have laws in this province that allow for companies to pay off their creditors and the banks and everyone else before they pay off the pensioners who have contributed of their own time and of their own money to the pension plan.

We need to have a pension plan that is made in Ontario, that will help the citizens of this province to plan for a better future, particularly the 65% or so who have no pension plan. We need to give that option to pay into a plan. You can't just pick up the phone and phone somebody and say, "I want a pension plan"; you need to have a setup which allows for voluntary payments so that people can contribute to the pension plan and can look forward to having something when they get older,

something that they voluntarily pay into, if it is to their benefit, something that they can recoup at the time they retire.

It is not time for us to simply sit here and say that the CPP will be good enough. It is not time for us in this province to ignore the plight of the Nortel pensioners and all of those who have no pension. It is time for us to be bold. It is not time for an incremental approach. It is time for us to do what is right at the beginning and not talk about, "A little bit is being done, but we can do some more later."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments of the member from Beaches–East York. My father was a customs officer. Your talk about being an immigration officer and paying 8% of your salary struck me as a story I'd heard many times over. But my great-grandfather was one of the first federal agricultural inspectors—I think his badge number was 12 or something—in the federal civil service. He died in 1935, and my great-grandmother lived happily on his pension until 1967. My grandfather, who was a private entrepreneur in the hardware business, said to my father, "Join the federal civil service. If you can get a job, get a federal civil service job," and Dad, when he came back from the war, within a very few years did that. It worked well for my father and my family.

The reason I point that out is that most Ontarians don't have those defined benefit plans. They don't have them backed up by the government of Canada. They have to fend for themselves. In that perspective, I come to this being a proud constituent of Algoma, from where the Prime Minister of Canada, Lester B. Pearson, brought in the Canada pension plan, and we know that it helps many people.

But here we are, in the year 2010, looking out across our borders and watching a general strike in France over the issue of when you can collect your pension. I think it highlights the difficulties of governments determining in a real way how you can guarantee this. I think this is a modest first step in this bill, but it's one that we need to take.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You want to call me "Richmond Hill" all the time. It's Thornhill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Here's for Thornhill. Thank you, Speaker.

Now that we've got that squared away, this is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You look more rich than thorny.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I don't know if I should like that or not. Was it a compliment?

Let's talk about pensions for a moment. What's interesting about today's debate is that the debate on the bill itself seems to have taken place in the leads yesterday,

and today this is a debate on ideological approaches to pensions, not on the bill.

I think we can all agree, Liberals included, that this is a step—but it's a small step—in a particular direction that doesn't resolve the issue that we have to face.

1720

Take a look, for example, at the pension benefits guarantee fund, which exists—or more correctly these days doesn't exist in a solvency state in the province of Ontario. There are only three jurisdictions in the world, according to my information, that have a fund like that one. One is the pension benefits guarantee fund here in Ontario. One is in the UK and one is in the United States.

For all intents and purposes, although these three jurisdictions are doing business on an as-usual basis, they are all in some level of bankruptcy. The UK has just gone through a tremendous austerity move; the United States, if China ever called the loans, would be in default; and the province of Ontario has a deficit that, were it in a position to have to be paid at this point, also couldn't meet—so we're talking about liabilities and assets. We can't do it. We're talking about pensions.

Back in 1965, when I joined Bell Canada in my first job, there wasn't a question about whether there were pensions. You signed the pension card. We haven't got that now, and we have to consider where we're going over a period of time on a number of levels—national, provincial and individual.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to reiterate yesterday's lead that I did that in the last few months, the Minister of Finance has tried to indicate to the people of Ontario, the federal government and the provincial government that the best way to go is CPP enhancements. Well, I agree; the NDP are in favour of CPP enhancements. Also, the old age security: We're in favour of enhancements, but I don't think it's going to cut it. If you saw the articles in the paper in Toronto yesterday, they said that Mr. Flaherty is backtracking now and saying he's not sure he can put it together; he's not sure all the provinces are on board; he needs two thirds of the population of Canada plus two thirds of the provincial governments to ratify it. He doesn't know whether he can do that or not. So I think this is just the first step in the backtrack that the finance minister has bet his marbles on, that the federal government is going to come through with CPP. If they don't, what happens then?

What should have happened is the Ontario pension plan, which would have addressed the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan. It also would have made them feel much better that they're contributing and being involved in pension reform rather than just supplementing the 32% of defined pension plans, so everybody would be involved. Everyone would be taking a place.

It's doable. I gave the numbers yesterday. It's a matter of \$1 to \$5 per plan member per year, which is not a lot. I think \$10 was the upside—\$10 a year to make it work. I don't know why the government doesn't entertain it. I

don't know why the government isn't looking at it. It's certainly going to come back and bite us if they don't come up with big improvements to the CPP, and I don't think they're going to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in the debate and to comment on the words that were shared by the member from Beaches–East York. It was great to sit here and listen to his comments. It's always a pleasure.

He referred to the 13 million people in Ontario, many of whom are getting older, and we know that the baby boomers are moving to retirement age. So that's exactly why, knowing that over 60% of the people in Ontario do not have a workplace pension that was referred to by the member from Beaches–East York, we're here debating Bill 120 today.

Ontario is in the midst of a multi-phased reform of Ontario's Pension Benefits Act. The purpose is to modernize and strengthen the regulations of workplace pensions, which is exactly what we heard the member from Beaches–East York discuss. Is that it: Beaches–East York?

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Good; Beaches–East York. I'll just keep saying it, and then we'll all have it. Thank you. Sorry, Speaker; I got a little sidetracked.

We're talking about a multi-phased approach that this government is taking. This is absolutely something that needs to be done. We recognize that. In May, Bill 236 was unanimously passed in this House. Again, the debate that we're having here today includes all parties in recognizing the importance of this pension reform. Today we continue to discuss Bill 120, which is the next step in this multi-phased reform for pensions in the province that the McGuinty government has proposed—this broad package of reforms. Of course, the reforms will strengthen Ontarians' pensions, address the concerns of workers, concerns of retirees, concerns of employers and, I always want to add, concerns of the self-employed as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to, first of all, thank my colleagues from Algoma–Manitoulin, Thornhill, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Kitchener–Conestoga for their fine and thoughtful comments.

What was said by the first two, the members from Algoma–Manitoulin and Thornhill, I think needs to be reiterated. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin did say that this is a modest proposal, and I think he is correct in that; it is modest. The member from Thornhill called it a small step, and I thank him, because I think that's what I was trying to say.

One of Tommy Douglas's most famous sayings was, "Dream no small dreams." I think that this is a small dream. What we should be looking at is a big dream. We should be looking at: What do we want for the people of

Ontario? What would be universally accepted? What would all people welcome? I would suggest that what all people would welcome would be a pension plan on the same kind of scheme as medicare. That is the most universally accepted and recognized hallmark of what it means to be a Canadian and an Ontarian. If we took that big step, we could be equally proud.

My friend from Thornhill talked about the liabilities and assets and talked about defaults in the United Kingdom and the United States, but I would suggest, with respect, that this is not entirely linked to pensions. The defaults in the United States and in Great Britain have a great deal more to do with fiddling in the marketplace than with pensions, a great more to do with corporate greed than with pensions. In fact, if there are any difficulties, as there are today in France, it's only because the marketplace has not been kind enough to the pensions as it should have and could have been.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: For many of those who are pensioners today, in their living memory they can remember when retirement used to be a descent into poverty for the vast majority of those who had left the workforce. For the generation of their children, those of the baby boom, like the majority in this House are, pensions began as a product of the postwar society, primarily in the 1960s, when we said, "We've got to be able to do better than this; old age cannot be a sentence of a slow drift into poverty." So the Canada pension plan and various private sector pension plans came into being. The current generation of seniors are perhaps one of the first in our country's history to know that they can retire and live at least a comfortable, basic existence.

Our challenge at this juncture in time, as legislators, as representatives of the people of the province of Ontario, has been to say that those assumptions that were made 40 and 50 years ago don't stand the test of time in the 21st century. We find ourselves looking at the reasonable prospect of a drift back into poverty with a public pension that's not adequate for the job.

That brings us to where we are today, with a bill that's designed to be a step in the process of strengthening the system by which older adults who have left the workforce can retire on a combination of their savings and their pension and live a life of dignity and reasonable comfort.

One of the things that differentiates us from this debate 40 and 50 years ago is that as a society, all across the world but especially here in North America and most especially in Canada, we're living longer. I can remember, as I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, you would shake open the newspaper, and if you happened to read the obituaries, there would be something saying, "So-and-so passed away on such-and-such a date surrounded by family and friends. He lived to the ripe old age of 72."

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Men were expected to live into their early to mid-70s; women, somewhat longer. There weren't that many

people who lived to be octogenarians back in the days when we grew up and back in the days when the fundamental pillars of the Canada pension plan and many private sector pension plans were first cast in legislative or legal concrete.

That takes us to where we are today, because, very clearly, we're living longer. It's normal now for a man to live into his late 70s and early to mid- and sometimes late 80s and for a woman to live normally through her mid-, maybe late, 80s and into her 90s.

God knows, in my home city of Mississauga: Congratulations, Hazel McCallion; at age 89, you have been elected mayor. Hazel McCallion is a vibrant, with-it 89-year-old, and she's not drawing a pension.

One of the conundrums, one of the challenges, faced by this Legislature in considering the options open to us is in defining what it is we would really like to do. There's one side of the debate that says that what we really need is a universal, publicly funded, defined benefit pension that's indexed to inflation, that will allow people to draw on a comfortable income, paid for by the taxpayer, for as long as they should live. Presumably you can work as long as you wish to work or can work, and you'll pay into it a modest sum and, after retirement, you get to draw on it.

In considering this, which sounds like a wonderful, golden ideal, we have to ask ourselves: Who's writing the cheque for such a defined benefit pension? The answer to that is: You are; the taxpayer is. It's something that's drawn from tax revenues now and in the future. With the baby boom bulge on the cusp of beginning to turn into seniors themselves, next year, 2011, marks the transition of the very first baby boomer to the age of 65. For about 20 years, the population of seniors in North America, and particularly in Canada, is going to grow hugely.

Let me give you one metric to give you an idea of how quickly the population of seniors is going to grow. For every senior alive today, by the time we, the baby boomers, have ourselves mostly become seniors, there are going to be two seniors. For every octogenarian, a person aged 80 or above, alive today, by the time we, the baby boom generation, are ourselves mostly into our 80s, there will be three.

Consider, for example, not merely the impact on providing a decent living income for men and women who are probably looking at upwards of 20 years or more of retirement; consider also the impact on social services, on health care and on the fact that fewer and fewer working people will be paying more and more money to support more and more elderly people. That will include me and that will include most of my colleagues and most of my friends and neighbours.

This is a serious challenge. While taking the option that, "Oh, that will be paid for out of future tax revenues," is one way of assuming it away, another way of assuming away the challenge is to say, "We think, frankly, this is something that the private sector should manage, so this matter should be sent to the private

sector, and the private sector will look after it," and that's equally unrealistic.

So where, between these two extremes, should the province of Ontario be leading our great Canadian nation into landing on a sustainable, long-term solution for all Canadians and certainly for all Ontarians to live a life of dignity and comfort in their older years? That's where our Premier and our Minister of Finance and, I am going to assume, where all three parties in this House in the end are going to land and say, "This is where we're going as a province. This is something that will define us during our time representing the people of Ontario." Regardless of which party sent us here, regardless of which community we speak for, if we can come up with a workable solution, this is something that years hence we'll be able to elbow somebody and say, "Hey, I did that. I stood up and voted for that. I helped promote that. I helped put that together." That's the challenge before the House today.

Now, we're considering a number of different options as we begin our examination of pensions, and let's just have a look at some of the objectives of this legislation. This is sort of like, what is your strategic objective here, and where are you going in broad brush terms? So I'm going to give you the five points that delineate where the province of Ontario is aiming to land in terms of its pension reform.

The first point: strengthening Ontario's pension funding rules by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvements. In other words, when somebody makes a contractual agreement with their employers, what we're saying is, you're going to actually do what the agreement says you're going to do.

Number two: providing a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and jointly sponsored pension plans. We'd like this to be something that is wider and broader. We want more types of organizations participating, and indeed there are more types of organizations today than there were 40 and 50 years ago when we first began to consider the notion of pensions. And RRSPs are not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Number three: Clarify pension surplus rules and provide a dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surpluses should be allocated on winding up a pension. As the name suggests, it does come to pass that an organization will fail, merge or whatever, and there's a group of people who say, "This is my pension plan here. How do we wind up the pension plan so that I'm not left in the cold and somebody doesn't simply abscond with the funds that are supposed to pay my pension in retirement into which, in good faith, I paid during my working life?"

Number four: Provide a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by implementing a strategy to build reserves, increase revenues, limit current exposure and reduce risk to taxpayers in the future. Well, as the name suggests, the pension benefits guarantee fund is one

that's administered by the province of Ontario—I believe we're the only province that has such a pension benefits guarantee fund—and the pension benefits guarantee fund says to pensioners in the province of Ontario, "If something unforeseen should happen and your pension fund manager has invested badly, your equity has dried up, your company has gone out of business, the pension benefits guarantee fund will guarantee your pension payouts up to a certain limit." So it basically says that there's an insurance policy on your pension, and it's limited to the amount in the pension benefits guarantee fund, and the maximum payouts.

And finally: Further strengthen regulatory oversight and improve plan administration, which is self-explanatory. As pensions become broader, more diverse, more complex, and as there are more flavours of pensions than there are now and with more people coming to be eligible to draw pensions, we certainly need to clarify these notions of regulatory oversight so that we can watch you and make sure that something doesn't go wrong and plan administration which is good governance; in essence, quality assurance at the regulatory end and quality control at the governance end.

These are actually the very simple objectives, five objectives of what the province of Ontario is trying to do with this particular resolution. I'm going to go into a little bit of detail on it. One of the first things that people say when they sit down and start reading about pension plans is, "Frankly, I don't understand it" or "I can't stay interested in it," and, honestly, who can blame you? Because often a lot of these things are written in language that in and of itself is a wonderful, powerful non-prescription sedative.

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Let's take it from the top and talk about the two fundamental types of pensions. There are defined benefit plans. A defined benefit plan means that however long you may have served in your job and contributed to your pension, when you retire, your benefits are defined. Most people look at this and say, "Hey, that's what I want. I only want to work a couple of years and I want to draw a defined benefit plan for the next 35 years."

Interjection: Teachers have that.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Many types of employees do have such a defined benefit plan. They're quite common in the public sector where, very frankly, a lot of times the defined benefit plan is a blend of current taxation and the assets in the plan itself. It's been pointed out that teachers have such a plan, and the teachers' pension plan is probably one of the best-administered pension plans in the country, if not in the world. If there's anything of significance in Ontario that the teachers' pension plan doesn't own, it's because the government of Ontario has probably not chosen to sell it.

One of the challenges facing many pension fund administrators in our country, and certainly in our province, is that they have a big pot of money which they've got to invest and earn a good return, and they're often looking to say, "What assets are available for me to buy, admin-

ister or participate in, in the equity end, so that we can deliver better-than-average returns and in so doing, pay the benefits to our pension plan members?" That's sort of a side digression, but it's one of the challenges for governments of all stripes, which is to make sure that your pension plans are actually able to invest in assets that are at home, and they don't have to go abroad to invest their money in order to provide benefits at home.

Defined benefit plans come in a number of different flavours. There are what are called flat-dollar plans, which provide a fixed amount of retirement benefits based upon each year of service, and the benefit rate just reflects the current economic situation. So, in other words, you'll get this amount of money from your pension plan regardless of the circumstances.

Another are career-average pay plans which provide retirement benefits each year based upon the pay for that particular year. Again, these plans don't often fully reflect the economic situation at retirement. However, the plans usually get career-average updates at regular intervals. So in terms of defined benefit plans, that's another option.

The final one is final-average pay plans, which represent the majority of non-union plans. Each year the participant earns retirement benefits which reflect pay very close to what you were getting at retirement.

The other type of plan is the defined contribution plan. A defined contribution plan provides a definite amount of contribution into each individual's retirement account each year. Most times, this is a blend of contributions from the individual and from the employer. This pooled money accumulates investment returns, be they equity returns or interest or a blend of both. It's usually invested by a fund manager and well-diversified so that one bad investment doesn't take the entire pension plan down. This account accumulates with your contribution and with the funds' investments each year, and on retirement the accumulated fund is used to provide lifetime pension retirement income to the participant.

In Canada, for example, the typical type of defined contribution plans include money-purchased pension plans, deferred profit-sharing plans, registered retirement savings plans—which are the ones most people are familiar with—locked-in retirement accounts and registered retirement income funds. That's probably a lot more than a lot of people ever knew about the pension plan, which, in the end, you may be drawing upon for your own retirement in a lot of years, a few years, or imminently.

Many employers like these arrangements because their obligation is only to contribute into the individual account each year, so how the account grows depends on who's administering it. You can have, for example, as some of us do, a self-administered RRSP, or your bank, your financial institution, your employer or your life insurance company can administer the RRSP fund for you. So from the vantage point of the employer, the cost is then easier to control.

In fact, sometimes for an employee, they also figure that the greater degree of control gives them the oppor-

tunity to maximize their own retirement benefits, and should the fund or the retirement plan do very, very well, it would allow an employee, for example, who happens to be an astute trader to say, "Okay, I am where I need to be. I'm going to retire earlier than my planned 60, 66, 70, 62"—whatever your magic age is. If you've been a successful investor, you might say, "I'm going to take my retirement from the workforce at such-and-such an age"—in your 40s, in your 50s, in your early 60s, whatever is the case.

So there are some strengths and weaknesses with each particular type of plan, and which one is better for you depends very largely on your circumstances with your employment and your own personal preferences. A lot of people say, "Well, I would like to have the security of a defined benefit plan into which I pay a modest amount and am able to collect pretty much for the rest of my life."

One of the risks in looking at the type of legislation that Ontario is contemplating can come from some of the countries that have a public unfunded pension plan. For example, in Chile, they have a means-tested universal pension that provides a declining supplement to low-income pensioners. It's financed from general tax revenues and also from a sovereign fund. In Denmark, they have a universal pension plan financed from general tax revenues. It exists to supplement low-income pensioners, and both benefits are subject to clawbacks, depending upon your particular income level. In Sweden, they have a contributory public scheme that operates as a notional defined contribution plan, whatever that means. It provides a minimum pension guarantee, and it, too, is administered by the state. In Switzerland, they have a contributory defined benefit plan which is subject to very tight maximum and minimum limits, and it's partly financed from general tax revenues.

So in the course of this debate, we're going to be considering many different types and models of pension plans, but it's worth looking at the experience worldwide, and it's also worth considering the amount to which either the individual or the company is expected to carry the load and the degree to which general tax revenues are expected to carry the load.

To the degree that this House comes up with an acceptable, fair, equitable and economic plan will determine our success in this legislation. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue. It's an issue that I find many, many people, including myself, have difficulty either getting their head around or have difficulty perhaps getting interested in. Or perhaps—and I think of, for example, a Nortel pensioner who finds himself in the unfortunate position that they and their family have to become cognizant of what's going on here, something that they never really had to think about. They worked through their career, a career based on trust that they had a

defined benefit pension arrangement, and then, in spite of the fact they worked very hard—and I know my office has spoken with people, for example, who worked with Nortel and came to find out that everything looked great and that a defined benefit guaranteed these kinds of stipends on a regular basis when they retired; however, the money had run out.

We know that there has been considerable pressure on this government to review that particular situation. We know there was a by-election in Ottawa where essentially, in the middle of that by-election, as I recall, this government made a promise—and I'm always concerned when we hear of this government making a promise—to offer relief to Nortel pensioners through the pension benefits guarantee fund. We know of that fund through the somewhat up-and-down history with respect to our steel industry. Money has been transferred, as I understand—I hope this money has been transferred and I hope all of us are in a position to explain to the Nortel people that perhaps they can sleep a little easier in the evening.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand to comment on the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. He spoke for 20 minutes quite eloquently and he gave, I think, a pretty good, almost professorial account of pension plans and what is happening around the world.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: The comment over here was that that would be Professor Bob. That is not my comment, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville obviously has done a fair amount of research on this particular topic. He spoke wisely, but at the end of all of it, for the 20 minutes, I was unsure—perhaps he can explain to the Legislature when he gets his two minutes—precisely where he thinks this government is going on all of those issues, because the plans that he has outlined from Sweden, the plans of other nations, the differences between defined benefit and defined contribution plans, I don't really see in this particular bill.

Although I welcome the research that he has done, it did not leave me any the wiser in the end precisely where the government is going on this bill or whether or not he, as a member of the government party, thinks that they are going in the right direction or in a timely fashion to the right direction. So I would ask him, in his two-minute response, if he would deal with that so that we might be better educated, not necessarily on all the pension plans that are involved, but precisely where this government intends to go. As some members have already said, it is but a very modest step. We're trying to figure out how modest that modest step is.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: All through the evening I've been listening carefully to the comments about Bill 120, and I have to say, to a person, they've been measured and

focused on ensuring that we get the message from all sides of the House that pension reform indeed is supported, and that it's understood.

Over the 20 years since it's been reformed, these are several steps that are being proposed. The first phase was already implemented and the report that has been giving us some of the reasons why we're moving in this direction is playing into that, for us to take that analytical view. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville has been providing us with some of that background information, quite talentedly as well.

I think what we also have to recognize and support—I think it's already been said by everybody here, as well, with compliments to them—is that this isn't the end of pension reform and that there are some very difficult roads ahead that we have to get a handle on. People have referenced the senior citizen wave that's coming through that needs to be evaluated, and that, too, will be done. The government has already indicated that it plans to move forward in those kinds of areas. That will require even more work, more research, more study and more recommendations to come out on how that can improve.

I compliment all the members here up to the point where we've discussed an acknowledgment that pension reform is necessary. The member from Mississauga–Streetsville kind of captures that spirit in his regular way, because he does his homework on these issues and he does a good job of that.

In my last remaining seconds—I think I will probably be ruled out of order; if it happens, I will accept that—I want to say congratulations to all of those people during the municipal elections who have put their names forward in the riding of Brant, and I wish them all the best.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That was out of order.

The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: In which case, I'd like to also congratulate all the municipal politicians in Parry Sound–Muskoka, where there are some 26 municipalities and a lot of interesting races. I congratulate everyone for putting their names forward.

Back to the business of the day, I wanted to comment briefly on the speech on Bill 120, the pension bill, made by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

This pension bill is about strengthening the solvency rules. That's one of the things it's intending to do, and I think it is a small step.

For those people who do have defined benefit pension plans, particularly, and are counting on those defined pension plans and are paying into them over a long time period, the government has a responsibility to set the rules so that the plans are solvent and so people can count on them in their retirement.

A recent report that just came out last week showed that, on average, Canadian pension plans at this point are funded to about 87 cents on the dollar, so if they wrapped up today, you'd actually only get 87 cents for each dollar

you should get. That's obviously not an appropriate situation.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville was talking about various other systems around the world. We do have some basic retirement income security in Canada that serves low-income earners well—that's the CPP, the GIS, and OAS, old-age security—but beyond that, you're relying on either your own RRSP or other plans. I note that in yesterday's *Globe*, in talking about the recent negotiations between the federal and provincial governments, there appeared to be broad agreement on the idea of regulating the private sector to create a new lower-cost pension option for workers who do not have a pension, to be used by small business as a way of offering pensions to employees. I think that's an idea that needs to be explored.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I want to thank those who provided me comments.

To the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, I'd say that if we get this right, then the type of corporate pension failure like Nortel should be far, far less likely to happen in the future. The key thing to remember about these proposed reforms is that, if passed, the measures in this bill are going to allow the pensions to keep money in the fund and then watch it, because governance and proper plan administration is something that, over the years, we haven't provided the proper legislative framework for. That's one of the things that this bill is there to do: to ensure that the custodians of people's life savings and their retirement income have to manage them in a prudent, responsible and sensible manner.

To the member for Beaches–East York, I thank him for his comment on my “professorial” tone; I think he used those words. Perhaps he should have attended my lectures when I taught at Ryerson University. We need to strengthen the existing funding rules, and that's timely and that's essential.

I'm just going to go back to one of the things that I did mention in my 20 minutes, and I'm just going to take one particular point, which is to clarify pension surplus rules and to provide a dispute resolution to allow members, retirees and sponsors to agree on what should happen when a pension plan is wound up.

Another thing that we're going to have to deal with in this legislation is contribution holidays. I touched on that, and some of the other speakers have touched on that, but that's the real meat in the sandwich and that's the part that this particular piece of legislation will, in the end, be judged on.

To the member for Brant, I very much agree with his comment that people are watching us and they want us to work together as legislators, to speak and to act responsibly.

To my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, we tend to agree on a lot of things, and this particular measure sounds like another one of them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I know that we are probably zeroing in on the last few minutes of debate this evening, but I do want to participate in my more lengthy option when it comes to talking about Bill 120.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville put me on the right track; the member from Peterborough and the member from Thornhill, who had some comments about pension reform—I respect what he was saying regarding the way in which we have to continue the debate on what has happened, what is happening and what's going to happen.

One of the biggest things I want to start to focus on is, “Where to from here?” when we've introduced previous legislation and announced clearly that this would be phased. We're now on phase two, and I know there's a phase three that has already been announced that we're going to work towards. I personally will not be surprised to hear that there's going to be a phase four and maybe even a phase five, insomuch as the debate has opened up our eyes to an issue that a lot of people over the decades have not been paying attention to, and that means successive governments. It doesn't mean one of the easy hits that I've talked to in the past about the partisan issue; this is about all of us wanting to make sure that the pension reform that we are engaged in—our discussion today and in the next little while—is based on trying to plot that path that we can get to, which is to have more people in a more secure situation in their senior years concerning pensions. That requires us to have an understanding of what the broad package is all about.

1800

Let's take a look at Bill 120, but before that, I'll go back a little bit into what the reforms before Bill 236 were, introduced in the province in 2009. The pension rules had hardly ever been touched in two decades. So, within a 20-year period, very little work, if not a little tinkering, was going on before 2009. I can almost guarantee—I don't have it factually—that there were individuals who were sounding an alarm bell because that's their job or that's their profession or that's where they gained their knowledge of financial security. Pensions is one of them.

What we are now dealing with is Bill 120, which is the next phase to Bill 236. The second stage of our reform would address almost 40 recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions. Our reforms will have responded to, with phase one and now phase two, two thirds of the 142 recommendations in that report. What we've done is, we've actually put an action to a report.

I do look over at the clock, Speaker, and I do recognize the power of the Chair, and because the power of the Chair is so strong and so great, I don't want to be ruled out of order for thanking my people in the municipal election, so how about if I sit down and allow you to do your next ruling?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That would be just fine, thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

POVERTY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question yesterday to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

The member for Beaches–East York, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: I stood in this House yesterday and I asked a question of the Acting Premier, and the Acting Premier saw fit to pass this question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

The question that was asked was a specific one. I asked questions related to the poor, who are worried that the government's poverty strategy has stalled. Specifically, I asked about a welfare review, an affordable housing strategy and a replacement of the special diet allowance.

Specifically, for the edification of all, the social assistance review was commenced—on 4 December 2008, the Ontario government released its poverty reduction strategy. The strategy made a commitment to “undertake a review of social assistance with a goal of removing barriers and increasing opportunities.” That was some two years ago.

On June 14, 2010, the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council released its report, in which it called for bold vision. The government, although they took that report, has not issued an official response to date.

My question was: What is the government doing on that issue?

The second one was related to the affordable housing strategy. Again, during the 2007 election, the Liberal Party promised, if re-elected, to create a long-term strategy for affordable housing. On June 3, 2009, the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Jim Watson, announced the launch of consultations on the strategy. Those consultations, in effect, must have taken place.

In February 2010, the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Jim Bradley, promised to release the strategy by June 21, 2010. In June, the Ontario government delayed release of the strategy until sometime in the fall of 2010.

Again, my question to the minister is: What are they doing on this file?

The third question related to the special diet replacement. On March 25, 2010, during the budget, it was announced that the special diet allowance would be cancelled and that something else would be substituted in its place. On March 30, 2010, the Minister of Community

and Social Services said that they would design the replacement program “over the next few months,” to quote her exactly. The *Toronto Star*, that great organ of Liberal policy, indicated in August that the replacement program would be announced in September.

Again, my question on all three of these was the sane and sensible one: What is the government doing on these files and when is it going to decide what it is doing and tell the people of Ontario? If they can't give this House a commitment to proceed, they can at least give us the time frame for the actions that they are contemplating, which have been put off and off and off over a number of years.

Instead of getting an answer, I was treated to what I considered to be a diatribe of government inaction—a whole bunch of stuff, none of which was related to those three files. I was given comments on kindergarten for children. I was given comments on how much money the minimum wage had gone up. I was challenged about the times when I was in government—I have never been in government—and putting the minister's record against mine. I have no record of having been a minister.

I asked three sane and sensible questions, and all I got was a diatribe. The last time I asked this same minister similar questions, I got the same diatribe; no answers to sane and sensible questions.

So I ask them here again, and I'm awaiting another diatribe because I don't expect actual answers. These are three programs the government has announced. When is the social assistance review to be completed and reported to the House, as promised as far back as 2008? When is the affordable housing strategy that was promised in 2007, 2009 and 2010 to be released to this House? When is the special diet replacement going to be brought before this House that was talked about on March 25, promised again by the minister's colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services on March 30, and which has been indicated in the press to have been due to be released in early September? We are now closing on the end of October. None of these have been answered. My question still stands; I hope the minister will answer it tonight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Children and Youth Services and the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I stand proudly as the minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy, because, after all, that is what the question was about. It was about the poverty reduction strategy.

I'll read the question that the member opposite posed: “Has poverty reduction fallen off the government's radar?”

Absolutely not. I'll take the opportunity here tonight to remind the member opposite with respect to the government's poverty reduction strategy and how we continue to make progress on that plan.

Ontario has the country's most ambitious and aggressive poverty reduction strategy, with a target of reducing child poverty by 25% within five years. It was our government that enshrined our targets in legislation and

made poverty reduction a commitment beyond those five years.

While the member opposite purports to speak on behalf of low-income Ontarians, I'm often left to wonder whether this is just political gamesmanship on his part. We have clearly continued on the poverty reduction strategy, and the initiatives that we have undertaken over the first two years of this five-year strategy have significantly impacted in a very positive way the lives of Ontarians. Despite a deep recession, we have made progress in the last two years and especially in the last six years.

Not only has it not fallen off the radar, my colleagues and I are breaking down silos and working together in ways never seen before to further the poverty reduction agenda. In fact, at least six of my ministerial colleagues have announced poverty reduction initiatives in the last six months.

This past September, 35,000 four- and five-year-olds started full-day kindergarten in nearly 600 schools across the province. I'll quote Dr. Charles Pascal, who says, "Establishing a strong foundation in the early years and building on it is the single most powerful factor in Ontario's social and economic future." If educating the workforce of tomorrow and making sure that every child has the education that they deserve to lift themselves and their families out of a life of poverty isn't poverty reduction, I'm not sure that the member opposite is speaking to his community and understands the work that we're doing to lift children and their families out of poverty. This is one of the most important things we can give to every child: an opportunity to succeed.

In September, another school year began with over 500,000 kids receiving healthy breakfasts and snacks so they're ready to learn. That's part of our student nutrition program and part of the poverty reduction strategy.

Just a few weeks ago, I visited the LAMP Community Centre in Etobicoke and launched the Healthy Smiles program. Were the member opposite on the side of Ontario families, he'd understand the incredible benefit

of such a program for children and families living in poverty. The Healthy Smiles program is going to help 130,000 kids in Ontario. That's 130,000 kids who previously did not have access to preventative dental care. They had to wait until their teeth were hurting before they could get help. Now we have 130,000 more reasons to smile.

In March of this year, we raised the minimum wage to \$10.25. Unfortunately, the party opposite voted against that initiative that will help lift families out of poverty.

Those are just some of the things that we've done in the last six months.

I don't want to forget the real Ontarians who are also benefiting today and those who will benefit tomorrow from our investments. Access to affordable quality child care is critical to helping families move out of poverty, and that's why we stepped in and filled the federal funding gap with a permanent investment of \$63.5 million. We saved 8,500 child care spaces and also 1,000 child care jobs.

We increased the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 per child per year two years ahead of schedule. About 530,000 families are now receiving it, and the party opposite voted against that.

We've undertaken comprehensive tax reform to lift families off the tax rolls. This strategy belongs to the people in the province whose experience has shaped it and whose lives are improved by it.

We have a lot more work to do on the poverty reduction strategy, and we look forward to doing that work. We're helping real Ontario families in a meaningful way. On this side of the House, poverty reduction is all about results; it's all about having a plan and achieving those results. It's not about politics. The member is running out of time to be part of the solution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, October 27, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1813.

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of Ontario**
Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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Wednesday 27 October 2010

Mercredi 27 octobre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure this morning to add my voice to Bill 122. This is something I'm really passionate about: our public health care system, the need for accountability and the need for using every penny that is devoted to care toward care. I want to give the listeners this morning a little bit of a background as to how we came to have this bill in front of this House. I will be going through what happened when the Auditor General put out the report on eHealth and the lessons that were learned then about health care spending and accountability, and then the request that was made of the Auditor General to look into the use of consultants. Then, when the Auditor General tabled his report a couple of weeks ago, what did this report tell us? Then I'll go into what's in Bill 122—because all of this is linked together.

I also want to say that I'm sorry I missed the minister's lead and the parliamentary assistant's lead yesterday. I tried really hard to make it to Queen's Park, but there was fog in Sudbury for Monday and Tuesday that was just incredible. I spent a lot of time at the Sudbury airport, but no planes were coming in or taking off. Nobody was more surprised than my husband, actually, when at 10:30 Monday night I ended up back at home, because since 6 o'clock that morning no planes had come or gone. I ended up driving yesterday morning through the fog. It was a hell of a trip, but here I am. I did read

the Hansard of the comments that were made by the minister, as well as by her parliamentary assistant, and I will be referring to this in my remarks.

I want to bring us back to Ontario's Electronic Health Records Initiative, the report from the Auditor General. It was last year, at about this time of the year, actually, that this report was made public. It all started with kind of nickel-and-dime expenses. We saw things like consultants being paid \$3,000 a day but billing for a \$1.65 tea at Tim Hortons, or \$3.95 Choco Bites, or a \$30 car wash, billing for child care expenses—and the list went on and on. The eHealth report showed that we had paid \$25,000 of taxpayers' money for a speech. That's like hundreds of dollars a second for every one of those words that were said in that speech. After the eHealth scandal rolled out, we saw that the CEO was let go—not without a \$317,000 severance. But what we saw really was a long list that the Auditor General gave us of money—taxpayers' money—that was supposed to help health care, that was supposed to give us an electronic health record, that really did not give us value for money.

He talked about having 300 consultants at eHealth, versus 30 staff. This is a lot of consultants. He showed us that from 2002, the number of consultants had increased by 10,000%, to reach 328 by the time the report was done. We saw that some of the consultants had been on the payroll for six years. That looks pretty much like a job to me, if you've been doing the same thing for the same employers for six years. We saw consultants awarded \$1.3-million contracts; that was a consultant awarding contracts to his own company. We saw sole-sourcing by a consultant to hire 15 senior management positions. Millions of dollars were paid in untendered consulting contracts, and the auditor keeps showing us that there was very little to show for this; there was very little value for money.

He put down in his report a rigged bidding system where, although it looked like a bidding system was in place, they already knew whom they wanted to hire, and would hire those people no matter what. He showed us favouritism in the awarding of contracts. In one bid, a senior manager awarded a bid to a consultant whose bid was five times the amount of the next highest competitor, which was already much higher than the budget that had been allocated to this.

He showed us a revolving door between work at the ministry and work for high-priced consultants. If the rules of the ministry didn't allow you to get the money you wanted, you would simply open up your consultant

shop and be hired at the price you wanted, and you didn't have to bother with salary scales or value for money. It went on and on. We also saw a board of directors that had been hesitant because the CEO had been hand-picked by the Premier of this province.

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What do we have? We have, in Ontario, a province that is at the back of the pack when it comes to electronic health records and an auditor who is telling us that the value of this investment has not been realized—those are all quotes. Ontarians expect way more from their government. They expect way more from their health care dollars than what they have been getting at eHealth.

After all this was made public by the Auditor General for everybody to see, heads started to roll. We saw the Minister of Health lose his portfolio; the Deputy Minister of Health left; the executive director of eHealth left, although handsomely paid; the president of the board left. We saw an outcry from every Ontarian about what had been going on: The use of our taxpayers' money is not to make consultants rich. It made the headlines of the papers for weeks on end in every corner of this province. People were shocked; they were disgusted; they wanted change.

The government said they would implement the changes in the Auditor General's report. They were outraged as much as everybody else. They had done the honourable thing: The Minister of Health was gone, the deputy minister was gone, the chief of eHealth was gone and the president and half the board were gone. We were starting fresh. We had sent a clear message that the use of overpriced consultants was not to be tolerated in this province. The message was clear: "Health care providers, listen up: The money you get is for health care and nothing else."

That was last year. That was eHealth. In the midst of all this, I introduced a motion that basically asked the Auditor General to not only look at what had been happening in eHealth, but look at the use of consultants in other health care providers. It was brought in front of the public accounts committee—I happened to be a member of public accounts at the time; I still am. The motion, which passed at public accounts, asked the Auditor General to look at the use of consultants within other parts of our health care system, and the auditor went on and did his work.

He published another report, which just came out this last week, called Special Report on Consultant Use in Selected Health Care Organizations, October 2010. What do we see in it? The picture is not much better than what we saw at eHealth. We saw the use of public health care dollars that was completely unacceptable by whoever looks at it. There is no way to justify this. I will give you a few examples of what we found in the Auditor General's report.

We found that a \$275,000-a-year hospital consultant claimed \$97,000 in fees for other consultants and \$50,000 in administrative support services fees. Neither of those was in his contract. The consultant billed the hospital

twice for over \$7,000 relating to a salary bonus, foreign exchange fees and a Christmas luncheon. The consultant then expensed his accommodation cost of \$400 per night for three nights in Chicago, along with a \$500 hotel phone charge—that was a lot of phone calls. He expensed accommodation of \$510 per night on a second four-night trip to Chicago; accommodation at \$700 per night for five nights in Singapore; and dinners in the greater Toronto area, one costing \$300 for three people, including \$140 worth of alcohol, and another costing \$350 for three people, including \$215 worth of alcohol. This is all there for everybody to see. This is sickening.

How can this be happening? Those are health care dollars given to health care organizations to provide care to people who need it, and we're buying \$215 worth of alcohol through an overpriced consultant? This is mind-boggling. How could this be happening? We had eHealth. We already told the world that the use of consultants was not acceptable, that to wine and dine on the public's back was not acceptable, but it is still happening.

Another example: One sole-source consultant CEO earned a per diem of \$1,100 for an eight-hour day. The consultant billed for 250 days each year, meaning that he billed for every single weekday for the last three years, excluding statutory holidays.

"In May 2008, he received approval from the hospital for a one-week trip to Hong Kong to attend a business-related conference as an invited guest speaker. However, he added a personal one-week trip to Japan as part of the excursion. We noted that the hospital paid the consultant's airfare claim of \$7,800, which included the airfare for his personal trip to Japan, and also paid his fees billed for every work day during the month, which included the two-week trip to both Hong Kong and Japan."

How can you be paid \$1,100 a day as a consultant and yet be paid for your one-week holiday trip to Japan and bill \$1,100 a day as a consultant? This makes no sense. This is sickening. This is not acceptable.

A third example: One hospital sole-sourced a contract to a consultant without any documentation whatsoever. The total cost ended up being \$58,000 higher than the contract ceiling price, but there was no documentation to support anything.

Example number four: A hospital sole-sourced a consultant for \$398 an hour. This consultant ended up billing \$2.6 million to that hospital, with no fixed-ceiling price, and no specific project deliverables were ever established. The hospital agreed to pay \$398 per hour—this is more than people working part-time on minimum wage make in an entire week. This is what we were paying that person for one hour of work, with no deliverables and no cap on expenses.

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Example number five: One hospital didn't provide sufficient records and didn't obtain receipts because—get this—the consultant would have charged them \$3,000 to give them the receipts. Did everybody get that? He didn't submit any receipts and asked to be reimbursed, and the hospital reimbursed the consultant. When the auditor

comes in and says, "Well, you have to show receipts for all of those expenses," the consultant says, "I will charge you \$3,000 to go get those receipts." This is unbelievable. This is going on with taxpayers' money right here, right now in this province under the McGuinty watch.

Another example: A hospital single-sourced a contract of over \$170,000 to a consulting firm to provide Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims management services from June 2007 to May 2009. There was no documentation supporting the single-sourcing of the contract. Did we get value for money? We'll never know. And at the time of the audit, the hospital could not locate a signed copy of this contract. We noted that the consulting firm continued to provide services to the hospital after the contract had expired, although nobody could find the contract. As a result, total payments to date have amounted to \$235,000, or \$65,000 over the original contract price, which was \$170,000, without any supporting documentation or proper contract renewal.

In this day and age, when the government has introduced new procurement rules after eHealth, we are still seeing sole-source contracts; we are still seeing consultants continuing to bill, with no deliverable. We are still seeing those kinds of examples.

The example of a LHIN, a local health integration network—those are new agencies in the health care spectrum—that single-sourced a \$716,000 contract, but a business case was only completed in the second year of the contract term—so basically, they started paying without having any idea of what would be the deliverable.

One hospital engaged a former management employee as a consultant within one month of the employee's leaving the hospital at fees that total about \$240,000 annually, which was \$100,000 more than his previous salary. Can we see the old boys' club in action here? A hospital executive leaves and then comes back and does the same thing for \$100,000 more? This is sickening. We all expect and deserve better care of our health care dollars.

The Ministry of Health gave preferential treatment to a bidder on a \$1,850-a-day contract and awarded a \$750,000 single-source contract. This is the Ministry of Health, the same ministry whose minister had to resign after eHealth and the deputy minister had to go. They all stood here in this House and said, "What happened at eHealth with the use of consultants was not acceptable." They acted, the minister was let go, the deputy minister was let go, and then they turn around and do the exact same thing that led to the demise of the previous Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, exactly the same thing: sole-sourcing expensive contracts with no deliverable.

The list keeps on: One hospital awarded a contract based on a consultant's proposal that skyrocketed from \$94,000 to \$210,000, even though the scope of the project, key deliverables, remuneration, ceiling price and timing were all absent. This is what I would call a pretty good gig. You sign on for a \$94,000 contract, you end up billing for \$210,000, you get paid and you have no deliverable, no ceiling price, no timing and no scope of the project. That means you pretty well get to do what you

want, when you want, at the price you want on the taxpayers' bill; on the backs of sick people who are denied care in our hospitals. You get to do that.

A hospital prepaid a sole-source contract worth nearly \$400,000 to enhance employees' leadership skills. Nothing wrong with investing into continuing education for your employees, but when we look at what happened with that money, it was not really getting value for the money spent. When a hospital hired three consultants as executives and paid them upward of \$300,000 annually, without a competitive process—do you know what that means? That means that they knew exactly the people they wanted to hire. Their internal policy would not allow them to pay that kind of money, so they hired them as consultants to do exactly the work of what an employee should do. And they really treat them like employees, because on their departure, one vice-president received termination pay of \$170,000 and the second one received termination pay of \$105,000. They also had access to benefits and access to what a regular employment contract would have given you at a much more reasonable salary. Let me give you another example: One hospital single-sourced a contract to a consultant, without any documentation or justification, that ended up costing \$58,000 higher than the contract's ceiling price of \$264,000.

The whole list goes on and on. The Auditor General's report has 32 pages. I gave you but 10 examples of what was in there, enough to give you a flavour of how we were not getting value for money; to give you the flavour that we live under a government's watch that has allowed this culture of entitlement to bloom, to continue, to foster, to expand. It is okay to pay friends of the Liberal government to go and lobby their friends. It is okay to hand-pick consultants and give them lucrative contracts. All of this is disgusting. All of this is sickening. All of this needs to change.

The auditor makes recommendations. I want to read the recommendations because the government—I read the Hansard last night—said that they have implemented every recommendation of the Auditor General. I will show you what the Auditor General's recommendations are and what we have in Bill 122, and to me, they are far apart. Some of the recommendations have been implemented. Some of them—frankly, it's a stretch to think that what we have in Bill 122 meets the recommendations of our auditor. The Auditor General makes those recommendations: "To ensure that its consulting services are acquired and managed appropriately and economically, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should make certain that its processes, decisions, and actions comply with the formal requirements as well as the spirit of the Management Board of Cabinet's procurement directive."

What does that mean in simple lingo? It means: Do what you're supposed to do. We have procurement policies in place; follow them. We don't have to reinvent them. The procurement policies that existed in Ontario before eHealth and that exist after eHealth are there.

They are good, according to our Auditor General—he knows a thing or two about accounting—but they are not being followed. All that the Auditor General is saying is, follow your own rules and things will improve dramatically.

Second recommendation: “To ensure that LHINs consistently comply with the requirements of Management Board of Cabinet’s procurement directive as it pertains to the engagement and use of consultants, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should consider requiring each LHIN to provide its board of directors and the ministry with a comprehensive annual report on its procurement and use of consultants similar to the reports required by ministries. To help demonstrate compliance with the directive, this report should include information on the nature and timing of the assignments, the ceiling amounts of the contracts, the extent of follow-on contracts, the total amount paid, and how the consultants were procured.”

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This is clear. The Auditor General goes through and says the LHINs should report back to the ministry as to who they hire when they hire them, what did they do and how much did they cost. Give us the whole picture. You will see that in Bill 122 we kind of go in that direction with a vague statement that says, “They will be reporting,” but it falls way short of going through the detail that this reporting should have. The Auditor General took the time, effort and energy to put those down on paper because if you don’t have the whole story, then you don’t have a story at all. But what do we have in Bill 122? We have an intention of having disclosure, but we certainly do not have mandatory disclosure of the nature, the timing, the assignment, the ceiling amount, the follow-on contract, the amount paid, the procurement—we don’t have any of this. We have an intention that says, “There will be disclosure.” When, where, how, how much? Well, nobody knows.

This is where I see a bit of a disconnect. You cannot say, “We followed every recommendation of the Auditor General,” because the Auditor General’s recommendations are detailed. They are there to protect the public so that we get value for money. Then we get this bill that has one line with no details. It’s kind of aimed in the right direction, for sure, but there is room to get off target quite easily. Why not implement?

We’ve tried this before. We had eHealth. You tightened up the procurements. Even after that, we continue to see this blatant abuse of taxpayers’ money going towards consultants, going towards lobbyists, that everybody agrees should not be tolerated and should not be happening here in Ontario in 2010.

The third recommendation from the auditor: “To ensure that hospitals implement the necessary policies, procedures, and processes for the cost-effective planning, acquisition, and management of consulting services:

“—Hospital boards of directors should ensure that recent mandatory supply-chain procurement policies for goods and services are implemented and enforced, and

that open, fair, and competitive procurement processes are in place; and

“—Hospitals should track and regularly report to local health integration networks (LHINs) on their use of consultants in a manner that demonstrates their compliance with required policies and sound public-sector business practices.”

Here again, in layman’s terms, the Auditor General is saying that the hospitals will have to be accountable. They will have to show how they hire those people, who they hire, how much they pay them and what the deliverables are, and they will have to make that public and transparent so we have accountability in the system—a pretty strong recommendation. The parliamentary assistant yesterday said, and so did the minister, actually, that they are implementing each of the recommendations of the auditor—but only partially. They don’t say that part about “only partially.” All you see in the bill is that they will be reporting, but it doesn’t give the details that would allow us to have complete transparency and the accountability that every one of us desires.

Health care is such an important portfolio. It is such an important government service, and it is so big: \$22 billion for hospital services alone; \$42 billion for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. It is so big. We need transparency; we need accountability. Our Auditor General goes into great detail as to how you can have strong and robust accountability so that you get this transparency, you get value for money. In the bill, we see that they will be reporting by hospital, but it is vague; we don’t know when, we don’t know where, we don’t know how often and we don’t know what this reporting will entail. Why not implement, like you said you would? Why not implement the recommendations that were made by our Auditor General? We’ve lived through two of those reports showing us the exact same thing: the abuse of taxpayers’ money by overpriced consultants not giving us value for money.

The Auditor General is clear. He puts forward recommendations that will bring transparency, that have an opportunity to stop this process that has been allowed to flourish under the McGuinty government, but the bill only goes in that general direction. It doesn’t go far. It doesn’t give details. It allows for a lot of loopholes. The Auditor General continues and says, “The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should discontinue the use of transfer payment funding to acquire consulting services for either its own or LHIN use and should assess the appropriateness of hospitals’ use of government funds to engage consultants to lobby the ministry and their LHINs for increased operating and capital funding.”

This is sort of the cherry on the cake, if that could ever be called a cake. I could think of other metaphors for what is happening, but let’s stick to that one for now.

The government gives money to a hospital to provide care to people who are sick. This money is used to hire lobbyists who are friends of the government so that—if they give money to friends of the McGuinty government, their friends go to the government, which gives the hos-

pital more money. No wonder they all fell over one another to hire lobbyists. It works. If you give money to friends of the McGuinty Liberals, you get money back. How could you go wrong? You give a little bit of money to their friends, and the government gives you millions of dollars.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member is impugning motive, and I think it's totally out of order for her to do that. I think she should withdraw her statement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think the member understands about impugning motive. Do you know what he means?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, I do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'd like you to refrain from doing that, okay?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will be very careful.

I will stick to what the Auditor General says. He says that they "should assess the appropriateness of hospitals' use of government funds to engage consultants to lobby the ministry ... for increased operating and capital funding."

The NDP has done its own research. We have, on paper for everybody to see—go to our website—the list of 14 that disclosed to us—they don't have to; they voluntarily disclosed to us—that they paid consultants to go and lobby on their behalf. Those are hospitals that receive operating funding from this ministry; they take that money and hire consultants to go lobby on their behalf. I'm just stating the facts.

When we start to look at who the consultants are that they hired, the names that come up are names of people that we know. Why do we know those people? We know them because they used to be staff in Mr. McGuinty's office. They used to be the staff of some of the ministers. I'm guessing that if they used to work for them, it's because you get along pretty well. But I won't go there; I won't impugn motive. But the facts speak for themselves. We have 14 hospitals that have hired people who used to work for Mr. McGuinty—sorry; used to work for the Premier—or used to work for some of the ministers. They hire them, they give them money, and those people go back and talk to their old boss, because they used to work for them, and then their old boss, who happens to be the Premier or the minister, gives your agency money. This is a pretty good racket, don't you think? This is—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Withdraw it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's withdrawn; absolutely.

Pretty good gig—is "gig" okay? It's a pretty good gig, if you can get it.

Anyway, the last part of the Auditor General's report is all about what the NDP has uncovered; that is, the use of lobbyists by hospitals, by universities and by other parts of the broader public service. This is something that I will talk about in greater detail once I get into the bill itself.

I wanted to really show the history of this bill. We had eHealth. We had the uproar that came after the Auditor General showed us a billion dollars that were spent on eHealth with very little to show for it. He showed us that, mainly through the use of consultants, we were not getting value for money. We were not getting deliverables. This is not to say that we don't need an electronic health record. I and everybody else who has ever worked in the health care system will tell you how good it would be to have a functioning electronic health record right here, right now in Ontario. Other jurisdictions have it and are reaping the benefits. We are, I would say, light-years behind them.

0940

We're just working on Bill 101 right now for the use of narcotics. If we had an electronic health record, a big part of this bill would not be needed at all. We would have a drug information system as part of our electronic health record. We would know who is prescribing narcotics, who is dispensing them, who is receiving them, how often, by whom etc., because this is what an electronic health record gives you. It gives you information. But we don't have any of this, and the billion-dollar eHealth scandal did not bring us any closer. But it rang alarm bells. It showed us that although eHealth meant well—they meant to deliver something that was going to be of use to Ontarians—they did it with no respect for the taxpayers' money. They did it in a way that allowed consultants lucrative contracts of a magnitude that is hard to wrap your head around, and all of this under this government's watch.

Then I asked the Auditor General to look at: Was it only at eHealth that consultants were misused? So he went and did a spot audit of hospitals and LHINs, and what he found was just as horrifying as what we had found under eHealth. I read a few of them. So what did the government do? They introduced Bill 122. Bill 122 is called An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector—nothing wrong with that. We all want accountability. We all want the taxpayers' dollars that go to health to actually be accounted for. As I said, a \$42-billion health care budget, \$22 billion going to hospital care alone: This is a lot of money. We want accountability, we want to know where this money is being spent, who is getting treatment for it; and if it's not for treatment, well, you have some explaining to do. This is what we have.

I talked about the value of trust. When eHealth came out, it sent a shockwave through the health care providers' community. Because of what had happened, it was shaking up people's confidence in our health care system. Our health care system is one of the cherished programs from the government in this province and all of Canada. We are all proud of our public health care system. One of the pillars of that system is trust. You have to trust your providers. What your health care providers ask you to do is often counter-intuitive. You have to trust them. But we trust them because they are part of agencies that we trust. They are part of a system that we trust that is there for us

to make us better, to help us heal in our times of sickness and to help keep us healthy. So when you shake the trust of any part of that system, you actually make our health care system vulnerable, and the health care providers reacted to this. They did not like that at all. They want accountability. They want people to have full faith, trust and comfort that their money is being used wisely to help them get better.

So, the Auditor General's report: I characterize it as an orgy of extravagant, high-flying spending on everything from exotic trips to gourmet meals to alcohol—all of this on the taxpayers' dime. I've read some of the details. If it didn't make you sick, then it's pretty hard to believe. It makes me sick and I've read the report quite a few times. This will lead more Ontarians to lose trust, and this is an awful price to pay.

We have a chance to do things better, but it is, at this point, a hard step to take. This government has been there for seven long years. All of what I read today went on under their watch. It is this culture of entitlement, as I called it, this culture of entitlement where it is okay—we see health care agencies that go into minute details when they buy a new couch. They will have three quotes, they will do the price comparison, they will be able to justify their decision-making to the last penny as to why they bought this, how they procured it and how they got value for money. But as soon as you go into the use of consultants, then all of this goes out the window: There is no more accountability; there is no more transparency. It's giving money to people whom you know because it brings—things that I'm not allowed to talk about in here, apparently, because I've been called on it.

So we have Bill 122. What is in the bill is that the broader public sector organizations—these are fancy words that mean hospitals, universities, local health integration networks: agencies that receive money from the government. They also include community care access centres, Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation, the Ontario Power Authority, the Independent Electricity System Operator, the children's aid societies, school boards, and every organization that received more than \$10 million in public funds in the previous year. We call them the broader public sector organizations. It's all of them. Those organizations will be prohibited from using public funds to hire lobbyists with that money. So if the government gives a hospital money for care, you cannot use that money to hire a lobbyist; or if it gives to a community care access centre or a local health integration network, a LHIN, or children's aid. The money that the government gives you, you won't be allowed to use to hire consultants.

It will require LHINs, local health integration networks, and hospitals to publicly report on the use of consultants. The problem is that it isn't clear what information the reports will include and whether they will be publicly available. I read for you the Auditor General's recommendations. In his recommendations, it is quite clear what should be included in that report, who should have access to it, the timing of it etc., but not in the bill.

The bill goes in that direction, but doesn't give you the details that the Auditor General has recommended should be included.

It will require LHINs, the 14 local health integration networks, and hospitals, 157 of them, to post expense claims on the website. Here again, very little detail. How agglomerated are they going to be? Are they going to be for all of the executives? Are they going to be per staff? Are they going to include the consultants who do work? The bill is very short on detail.

It will permit Management Board of Cabinet to issue directives requiring those organizations to comply with expense rules. Sounds pretty good. You will have expense rules and you will have to comply with them, but the bill gives no details, so we have no idea what those rules are going to be.

But remember recommendation number one from the Auditor General? Recommendation number one is that the procurement rules that existed before the eHealth scandal, that were tightened up after the eHealth scandal, are adequate. The Auditor General is satisfied with the procurement rules that we have. What is not adequate is that nobody follows the rules. So to say that we will now have organizations comply with expense rules, with no details provided, is a long way from answering the call of the Auditor General, who says that what we want is for everybody to follow the rules that are in place so that we have transparency and our money is used for what it's supposed to be used for.

0950

The bill makes it an obligation for those organizations to comply with Management Board of Cabinet procurement standards, and it allows Management Board to set guidelines for all publicly funded organizations. For the ones that are named, the ones that are bigger than \$10 million, the children's aid, community care access centres—those are the people who deal with home care—the local health integration networks or hospitals or universities, they will all have to comply. If you are smaller than \$10 million but receive government money, there will be guidelines.

There's nothing wrong with what is in those statements; the problem is, I guess, what is not in there. It's all fine and good to make rules, but the auditor tells us that we already have good rules in place, that the procurement rules that were there at eHealth were good but were not being followed, that the new procurements that were brought in after eHealth are still very good, but they're still not being followed. So we will make more rules. Will they be followed? I guess it's up to each and every one of us to decide on that.

The LHINs and the hospitals will have to prepare attestations demonstrating their compliance with the above provisions: a nice accountability step in there. There are some good things in that bill, and I have no problem pointing them out.

The bill includes the above provision in the accountability of funding agreements between organizations and the government of Ontario.

The bill allows the hospital board to reduce the compensation of senior management when the person has failed to meet a requirement under this act. In theory, that would mean that if a hospital executive does not follow the procurement rules, which means he hires sole-source consultants, hires one of his friends as a consultant, pays an amount of money that is agreed upon or not, does not follow the rules, does not sign a contract, does not go for three bidders, does not have clear, deliverable ceilings, timing, project-achievable, the board could reduce the compensation of the executive. If this ever happens in the province of Ontario, it will be a miracle.

The board signs a contract with their CEO. In that contract, the salary is included. To say that all of a sudden, boards of directors of hospitals, of universities, will be allowed to renege on a contract—we'll all be retired and our children will be retired by the time this makes its way through the courts. Because if you have a signed contract with somebody that says that you will pay him so much money to do that kind of work, and all of a sudden you reduce that compensation, you've just broken a contract. That doesn't usually fly too well, but I'll let lawyers argue that one out.

The bill includes hospitals in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act starting in 2012. This is something that I and every member of the NDP caucus have been asking for for a long time. There is so much resource—\$22 billion, remember?—that is being spent by our hospitals. What freedom of access of information means is that if you ask a question, the hospital will have to give you the answer.

Of course, this does not have anything to do with access to people's private medical records. There are laws in Ontario—PHIPA, it's called—that protect health information, and none of this would be accessible under freedom of access of information. What would be accessible, though, is: How much did they spend on consultants; how much did such a program cost; has there been an increase or decrease—any question you may have about hospitals, about universities, about community care. Sorry, this only goes for hospitals; universities are already covered.

Any question you have about a hospital, you will be allowed to ask under freedom of access to information, and they will have a duty to answer. You will only be allowed to go back to 2007, so whatever happened before 2007 will continue to be a secret for ever and ever, amen. But at least what happened after 2007 will be accessible under freedom of information, and the NDP thinks it is a good step. We certainly would have liked the step to be immediately followed by Ombudsman oversight.

Did you know that we are the only province in all of Canada, including the three territories, where our Ombudsman does not have oversight of hospitals? The people who are dissatisfied with the services happening in the hospital will go through the hospital problem resolution internally, and if that fails, it stops right there. The people are often not satisfied with the answer the hospital is giving them so they turn to the Ombudsman. The Ombuds-

man is the person who has the expertise to do that kind of investigation. He gets hundreds of complaints about our hospitals every single year, yet all he can do is tell those people that he's not allowed to investigate complaints into hospitals.

Why not? If you want true transparency, if you want true accountability, give the Ombudsman oversight of hospitals and put those issues to rest. By refusing to solve problems, you just allow them to simmer and become worse. If you would allow the Ombudsman to go to the bottom of things, to give people the answers that will bring them closure, then a lot of those complaints wouldn't even happen anymore. We would implement the changes that the people want in order to be satisfied with their hospital services. But this is not in the bill.

After 2012—it's important to note that the next election is in 2011, so it will be after the next election—we will have access to information in our hospitals from 2007 on. This is something we have been asking for and this is something that this bill will do.

Remember I mentioned that the first thing the bill will do is prohibit those organizations from using public funds to hire lobbyists? Well, there is nothing in the bill that will prohibit a hospital or a university or anybody else using non-public funds for consultants. Hospitals get 85% of their funding from the government, so in general, 15% of the budget of a hospital doesn't come from the government. To put that in perspective a little bit: 15% of \$22 billion. We're talking over \$3-billion worth of revenue that goes to our hospitals that is not covered by this law.

Three billion dollars hires a lot of lobbyists, or a very expensive one. One way or another, this bill doesn't cover a huge part of hospital budgets. In my book, \$3 billion is a lot of money, and I think in most people's books \$3 billion is a lot of money. It is not covered by this bill, so hospitals that want to hire lobbyists will continue to be able to do so. They will have \$3 billion at their disposal to do just that because the bill doesn't say that we're making the use of lobbyists illegal. We don't say that. We go kind of partly toward this in saying that, "Part of the money you get, you're not allowed to use that money to hire a lobbyist, but the rest of the money that you get, you can use as you see fit"—not exactly the robust recommendation that we had in the Auditor General's report; actually, far from it.

So you see the disconnect, where we have a minister who says, "We have implemented each and every one of the recommendations in the auditor's report," and then we have recommendations like this? A bit of a disconnect. In theory, there's a \$3-billion gap in this law that would allow the paying of a lobbyist—and a consultant, I suppose.

1000

What makes up that 15%? Well, in hospitals you usually have things like parking fees, you have a little bit of fundraising, you have research funds, you have pharmaceutical funds, you have money coming in through paying for private accommodations etc., the sale of every-

thing from crutches to fibreglass casts to everything else you can think of that we or insurance companies pay for when we go to a hospital. This is not considered public funds. It amounts to \$3 billion, and it is not covered in this bill.

As I said, the Auditor General recommends specific guidelines and obligations on reporting. There are no specifics in this act. There is intention of goodwill, the intention that we will have to report, but no details as to what will be reported—so same thing.

The consequences for contravening the act are weak, especially in terms of reducing hospital executive pay. That would be at the discretion of the board, because the way it works in Ontario is that our public hospitals have boards of directors. Those boards of directors are made up of people who live in the community, who support their hospitals and come together usually once a month to talk about governance. They also have one employee, and that's the executive director or the CEO—they have different titles in different hospitals—and then the chief executive officer, executive director etc. is responsible for everything else that goes on in the hospital.

So in theory, the government transfers the public money to the board, the board hires one employee, who is the CEO, the executive director, who then delegates the day-to-day operations of the hospital to that person. Here again, the employment contract that exists between the board and the CEO is just that: a contract. To say that all of a sudden you will be able to change it—I have doubts about this. As I said, there's the fact that the hospital won't be included under freedom of access until 2012. I realize it takes a little bit of time to let you know how to answer that kind of request. Maybe we could have done that a little bit faster, but apparently it's not to be.

I see that I'm running out of time. What I've really tried to do today is focus on a series of events that have happened since this government has been in power. We have seen this culture of entitlement to taxpayers' money and not getting value for money. We've seen this continue, grow and flourish to the point that it became disgusting to read report after report of lucrative contracts that you can't even wrap your head around. Those are taxpayers' monies that are supposed to be used for care, that are supposed to be used to get people better, and we see them going to rich consultants so that the rich can get richer on the backs of people needing care. The whole thing is disgusting. We've seen this with eHealth and, since the new report of the Auditor General, we've seen this in hospitals and in local health integration networks.

It has to change; we all agree it has to change. The message has to be clear. It has to be understood. It has to be acted upon. So what do we get? We get a minister who shows that she is disgusted, who says that she doesn't want to see this continue, but then puts forward some good ideas that lack details and that don't bring us the transparency that will be needed.

We need more than just a wake-up call, because the wake-up call was done with eHealth. A billion dollars? That was the wake-up call. It looks like, right after it

faded off the front page of the paper, everybody went right back at it and continued to give money to well-connected insiders to do work that did not, in the words of the auditor, bring us value for money. We didn't get our money's worth out of those people. They got paid for way more than what they worked for. This has to change. This bill, Bill 122, has some good accountability measures, but there are a lot of half-measures in it that won't bring the transparency we want.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond this morning.

I think it's important to remind those who are following this particular piece of legislation on television how it is in fact that we got here today and where we're at as we've discussed Bill 122 over the last little while.

We had a request from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which asked the Auditor General if the Auditor General would look into the LHINs and the hospitals and do a value-for-money audit on those particular institutions, which the Auditor General went off and did. He provided his report. We came back and we are here now discussing it. The legislation before you is in response to that work by the Auditor General.

I think it's important to remind people in the province who have an interest in issues related to transparency and accountability that that request from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts would not have been able to have been made if our government had not, some time ago, given the Auditor General the powers and the authority to go to the hospitals and go to the LHINs and conduct those investigations. Heretofore, he couldn't have done it, but our government gave him the authority and the power to do it. That's why we have the information that's before us and that's why we're more than happy to accept his recommendations.

I've got a long list of things here that I could recite about what we've done as a government around transparency and accountability to improve it and to move the yardsticks forward, but I'll rhyme off three that aren't usually on people's lists.

One, as we go into elections now we'll never see what happened in 2003 happen again. People are going to know the state of the finances of the province before an election. We did that. Now you'll know. We won't be taxed with a hidden deficit that people say isn't there.

We brought in fixed election dates. We don't necessarily think about that as a transparency issue. Talk about giving up some authority, some control, some power so that people know when an election's coming. We brought in fixed election dates.

The third one I would mention as well in response to the member of the third party is that after the 2003 election, that party was not even officially recognized, based on the number of people that were elected. We changed that. We gave them a budget and we gave their leader a \$30,000 raise so that they could be there and shine a light on what they felt was important to their constituents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nepean—Carleton.

It's a pleasure to respond to the hour-long leadoff speech from my colleague from Nickel Belt.

I want to first congratulate her, because she takes to this place a desire to do what is best for her constituents and for her political party. We may not be in the same one, we may come from different parts of the province, but I certainly appreciate your comments and the heart that you put into your job.

I share many of her concerns with the circumstances that have taken place in Ontario over the last seven years under this Liberal government, which has seen \$1 billion squandered which should have been going toward eHealth records but sadly ended up being spent predominantly on Liberal consultants and went really nowhere. Of course, now what we're talking about is a bill in reaction to eHealth 2.0, where Ontario's hospitals and local health integration networks have been essentially forced to pay for lobbyists to speak to insiders at the Ministry of Health and in the minister's own office.

Again, we've got very serious concerns in the Progressive Conservative Party, and we will not be supporting this legislation unless they adopt the Truth in Government Act, which was introduced by our party last May, within it and put forward amendments and adopt them. If you will recall, that bill would have prevented many of the abuses that the auditor had uncovered in his most recent report.

Again, in conclusion to where the Progressive Conservatives stand, there is no support for this bill unless those initiatives are adopted, and to my colleague from Nickel Belt, I want to thank her again for what she's doing here.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to speak following my colleague from Nickel Belt, who I think surveyed the landscape that we're dealing with, a landscape in which a small number of people are going growing very wealthy off a system that we need on a daily basis to ensure the health of people in this province.

My colleague went through the abuses of eHealth, of consultants working for hospitals and the weaknesses of this bill. There's no question that eHealth was a wake-up call to the practices that are going on on the part of this government, and when that wake-up call was heard, the Premier rolled over and hit "snooze," and things went on.

I want to correct the version of history put forward by the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan. It was the member from Nickel Belt, in that standing committee, who pressed for the inquiry by the Auditor General to give us the information that we have today. Let's be very clear: She was the one who made sure that these problems were brought to light.

I want to speak about her comments on the bill itself. If you look at that bill, you'll note that public money

can't be used for lobbyists, but if a hospital has non-public money, it can use that. And if you've worked with accountants, if you've heard of fun with numbers, you know that money can be shifted around to cover a multitude of sins. The way this bill is written, it will give certain small steps forward around access to information, but in terms of curbing lobbying, this bill is not going to be adequate to do that. This bill needs to be substantially strengthened to actually deal with the abuses that we've seen.

The health care system is at risk. It needs protection. This bill needs to go much further.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to re-emphasize that this is quite a comprehensive bill. It's going to, essentially, prohibit various activities by lobbyists in 259 classified agencies across this province, like the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, Cancer Care Ontario, community care access centres, hospitals, school boards and universities. This is quite wide-ranging. There's never been anything this wide-ranging in this Legislature. So this is unprecedented, really. That's why I urge everybody to support this legislation.

Also, in listening to the member speak, it's sort of very unnerving because I know the incredible demand on our hospitals—I've got one of the world's finest geriatric care hospitals in my riding, Baycrest hospital—the incredible pressure our hospitals are under because of our aging population.

We can't paint all hospitals and all agencies as not doing their very, very best to deal with people who are coming into their care every minute of the day, 24/7—the pressures they have to have adequate staff, support services, the facilities, the maintenance, the crunch for money, the volunteers. Baycrest has about 3,000 volunteers. The hospital administration, the hospital board of directors—the board of directors is all done pro bono. These are excellent men and women who have incredible pressures to take care of people, to find the money, to work with government. I want to put that into the perspective of all this. We can't paint all hospitals with one brush, that they are all bad.

There are too many lobbyists, but at least let's remember the incredible work done by our hospitals—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt, you have up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll start by thanking the members from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Nepean—Carleton, my colleague from Toronto—Danforth and the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

I spent 25 years of my life as a health care provider. I believe in our public, accountable health care system. I support it. You will hear me say all the time that I am really proud of the health care system we have in Ontario. It is the envy of a huge part of the world. What we have is a jewel, a jewel that is worth protecting. But

when problems happen that shake the confidence of the people of Ontario in our health care system, then I react.

I am a politician. For the last three years, I have been a politician. I became a politician because I want to continue the work that I have done before to protect our health care system. I see this—what happened at eHealth, what happened with the latest Auditor General's report—as a wake-up call to us all. We, as politicians, have a role to play to ensure that one of the pillars of our health care system, which is the trust, the confidence, that the people put in it, is protected and maintained if we want to protect what we cherish so much, which is our health care system. We have a job to do here, and how do we do this? We do this by having transparency and accountability measures that give results.

When I read Bill 122, it is sheepish. It goes in the right direction, it talks about the right things, it is broad enough, like the member said, but it doesn't give us the foolproof accountability that we want, and this is a serious flaw.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my honour to welcome to the House today Jim, Keelin and Eileen Lawlor, who are the parents and family of page Kieran Lawlor, and who are, for those who follow the history of the Legislature, related to Mr. Pat Lawlor. Welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Joining us today in the Speaker's gallery will be Georgina Bencsik and one of her mentees from the University of Toronto, Megan Townsend. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no further introductions, it is time for oral questions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. You can stand down the leader's question. I'll go to your first member's question.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PREMIER'S RECORD

Mr. Norm Miller: My question today is for the Premier about his lack of leadership. Time and again, Premier McGuinty fails tests of leadership. He said nothing that stopped backroom Liberals from a nasty whisper campaign against the Ombudsman. He spent millions of dollars on consultants after he told Ontario families that he had fixed the problem. The ministry didn't listen to

him. LHINs and hospitals don't listen to you. Liberal-friendly consultants like John Ronson at Courtyard, Will Falk at Accenture and Laurie Lashbrook don't listen to you. A year later it happens again, and you refuse to name names of Liberal-friendly consultants who got rich.

How can Ontario families have confidence in your leadership when you've stopped paying attention?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is a matter that we've had the opportunity to speak to on a number of occasions now in this Legislature, and I'm pleased to address it once more.

I want to remind my honourable colleague of a specific finding of the Auditor General, when he said, "Party politics" did not enter "into the awarding of contracts." I would encourage my honourable colleague to carefully weigh those words. I know that we can—and it's understandable and predictable—have differences of opinion, but this was a specific finding of fact made by an objective, independent expert, a third-party House official. He's a legislative officer. I would draw that again to my colleague's attention.

There was a real issue out there with respect to LHINs and hospitals when it came to the appropriate use of taxpayer dollars. We've addressed that by putting in place new rules, which we hope will have the support of my honourable colleague.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Premier McGuinty has been coasting on cruise control for a while now. A year ago he said that ministers and top agencies have to post their expenses online, but he doesn't post his own, so neither do they. He defended sex classes for six-year-olds before admitting that he hadn't even read the curriculum and didn't know what was going on. He disappeared for weeks when the police raided his government. He left the public confused about his secret G20 law.

A recent study calls you Canada's worst Premier when it comes to fiscal leadership: dead last in the country. What will it take for Premier McGuinty to start showing some real leadership?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always open to advice, some of which I even solicit. What I can say is that it's no secret that not everyone in the country supports what we've been doing here in Ontario. There are those who oppose the fact that we've hired 10,000 more nurses. There are those who oppose the fact that we've hired 2,900 more doctors. There are those who oppose the fact that we've hired back water and meat inspectors. There are those who oppose the fact that we're building 18 new hospitals. There are those who oppose the fact that we're building 400 new schools. There are those who oppose the fact that we've hired thousands of new teachers.

There are many who oppose the kinds of investments we've made on behalf of Ontario families, but I can tell you that when I speak to Ontario families, they very much support those initiatives, which improve their quality of life.

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

The eHealth scandal should have been the last that Ontario's families saw of their precious health care dollars squandered on sweetheart consultant deals, but last week's Auditor General's report found that consultants at hospitals and LHINs were lining their pockets while families were losing front-line services. Why won't the Premier call on the Auditor General to audit the rest of the hospitals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very grateful for the work that was completed by the Auditor General. If my honourable colleague feels that he ought to pursue this further, then she is, of course, free to suggest that to him, but I continue to repose a tremendous amount of confidence in the Auditor General and his findings. Should he feel that his findings warrant that he take it further, then that's up to him.

We have acted on the basis of all of his recommendations. We are adopting them in full and wholeheartedly. More than that, we're taking it a few steps beyond that, to go beyond hospitals and LHINs into the broader public sector; to make sure that precious taxpayer dollars are devoted, as much as possible, to front-line services. That's what our new Broader Public Sector Accountability Act is all about.

I was very disappointed to learn this morning that the official opposition will not be supporting this legislation. I certainly hope that the third party will, in fact, be supporting it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Accountability is what everybody wants. Transparency is what everybody wants, so that instead of paying \$275,000 in severance pay to inside consultants, families in Ottawa and families in London could have had 9,000 hours of home care for their loved ones. To make sure that health care dollars aren't being wasted on insider consultants, why won't the Premier ask the Auditor General to investigate spending at the other hospitals he didn't already look at?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleague understands this, but I think it's worthy of me saying it nonetheless. The Auditor General may have confined his investigation to a specific number of hospitals, but the new law that we seek to put in place will have application to all our hospitals. It will govern the behaviour of all those who work inside those hospitals, and the LHINs, and beyond that into the broader public sector. I encourage my honourable colleague to understand that.

Again, as I say, I was disappointed to learn that the official opposition will not be supporting this latest in a series of measures to heighten accountability and transparency. I hope we can count on the third party for their support in this regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let's be clear: The Auditor General discovered that health care dollars were squandered in every one of the 16 hospitals they looked at and at the three LHINs that they looked at, but there are 157 hospitals and there are 14 LHINs. Instead of sole-sourcing a contract at one hospital for \$1.1 million, we could have hired 12 more front-line nurses in Sudbury or in Hamilton.

So many questions are left unanswered. By looking at all of the hospitals, you would discover patterns; you would discover they're not all the same. Why is the Premier refusing to call in the Auditor General to investigate the other hospitals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so we're clear on the record here, the reason that the Auditor General has authority in the first instance to look at hospitals is because we gave him that authority. That was opposed by the third party and it was opposed by the official opposition.

We're on this now. We are dealing with it through the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. Again, I say to my honourable colleague, I ask for her support and the support of her party.

One thing I did want to mention, on a very happy note: This morning, I took the opportunity to celebrate the fact that one million more Ontarians now have access to a family doctor. Since 2003, if you break it down, we have found a family doctor for 16 more Ontarians every hour. That's moms and dads and their children. That's a significant step forward. I think it represents real progress, and we're proud to be able to do that.

CONSULTANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est encore pour le premier ministre.

Ontario's families have a right to know whether their public health care dollars are being diverted away from front-line care. They also have a right to know which consultants benefited by those sole-source contracts and deals.

Will the Premier release the names of the consultant firms investigated by the Auditor General for everybody to know and to see?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've had an opportunity to speak to this on a number of occasions—just now, in fact. I do want to remind my honourable colleague of what her colleague from Timmins-James Bay argued in 1996. He said, "That the Provincial Auditor should have a duplicate role of going in after they've already been audited to do it all over again to make sure that proper policy has been followed ... I say is wrong. It is not the job of the auditor to determine what public policy should be and how it's being followed."

What he was doing is arguing against the introduction of greater authority for the Auditor General when it comes to hospitals. We've given that authority to the auditor. We've done that notwithstanding the objections

of the third party. I think he has done a great job for us, and we're acting on the basis of all his recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: We all agree it is not the role of the Auditor General to make public policy, and it is not his role either to determine who should be fired in this last scandal.

What I'm asking the Premier to do is to make good on his word to be transparent, to be accountable. These are public dollars that were frittered away on booze, on expensive meals, on ritzy hotel rooms in Singapore. People have the right to know the names of those consultants who benefited. The money could have been spent to reopen closed emergency rooms, maybe, or get people out of the hallways at Sudbury Regional Hospital or the Thunder Bay hospital.

Why is the Premier talking transparency yet continuing to protect the identity of the consultants who squandered millions of precious health care dollars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says she is in favour of progress when it comes to health care for Ontario families, but their party voted against returning standards to long-term-care homes. They voted against funding to reduce wait times and hire nurses. They voted against lowering drug prices, not only for the government but for Ontario families who aren't covered by a drug plan.

We believe that having a strong health care system in place is very important to our families, and that includes, as necessarily part and parcel of that, ensuring that those precious tax dollars are translated as much as possible into front-line services, and that's what our new legislation is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France G  linas: What is happening right here, right now, in Ontario is important. The Premier talks the talk but refuses to act. We need to go to the bottom, we need transparency and we need accountability so that the trust we need for the health care system to survive will be there. Yet he refuses to share those names.

There is a \$3.7-million sole-source contract. That is 90 long-term-care beds that could have been provided. That would make a dent in an ER waiting room, wouldn't it? If the Premier is serious about accountability, if he is serious about transparency, then he has to walk the talk. He has the right to share with us the names of the consultants who cashed in on this latest scandal. Will he do it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague won't take yes for an answer. We are moving ahead with the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. We chose to act. She talks about walking the walk. We walked the walk; I think it was about a half-hour after we received the report. We introduced a new bill in this Legislature. We look forward to the support of the member opposite and her party when it comes to this.

What we're saying to Ontario families is that we completely agree that we should work as hard as we can

together to ensure that their precious health care dollars are translated as much as possible into front-line services, whether that's nurses or doctors, drugs or diagnostics, hospital beds or long-term care, whatever is needed to meet the needs of Ontario families when it comes to ensuring they have access to quality health care. That's what we've always stood for as a government and that's what we're going to continue to stand for through our new Broader Public Sector Accountability Act.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. On February 14, 1992, you said, "When you serve as a minister of the crown, special standards apply."

Yesterday, Premier, I asked you about serious allegations made by your hand-picked Minister of Research and Innovation. Despite six opportunities, you refused to comment. I'm going to simply ask you to tell this House whether you personally believe that the minister's comments were appropriate and meet the special standard that you once said you believed in.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that the minister has offered an apology. I believe it is sincere; I believe it is earnest. My honourable colleague raises a serious issue. I accept that.

I think my honourable colleague also understands, on the basis of his experience in politics, that from time to time, we, all being human beings, can slip. We can get carried away. We can say things that in hindsight we regret. The minister has acknowledged this. He has offered a full, sincere and earnest apology.

I think it's appropriate now for my honourable colleague to accept that. I think it's time for us to move on. It's time for us to find a way to work together with those who were newly elected in the municipal elections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's the problem: It was not an apology. The right thing would have been for the minister to offer a clear and unconditional apology. You know that was not an apology, I know it was not an apology, because we now see the minister's own response.

Instead of doing the right thing and clearly apologizing, the minister raises a new set of outrageous and baseless accusations against me and the Ontario PC Party. Premier, you know that this is beneath the dignity that families rightly expect from a minister of the crown.

Premier, I need to ask you: Did you speak directly with the minister before he released his latest statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll refer this to the minister.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is not a point of order. The Premier has the ability—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The question concerns the conduct of a minister. The Premier has referred that question to the minister, and the minister will have the opportunity to respond to his conduct.

Minister.

1050

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I offered an apology yesterday for the word used on Twitter. I should not have used the word. I should not have used the word in reference to the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister or the mayor-elect of the city of Toronto. I have apologized. My poor choice of words has distracted us from a substantive issue. The real issue for me is the use of homophobic smears in the final days of this week's municipal campaign.

We experienced three days of unrelenting, hateful, homophobic attacks posterizing the neighbourhoods gay and lesbian people live in; mailouts denigrating the characters of my friends, my neighbours and their children; and attacks on the radio on the legitimacy of gay and lesbian families. We have come, in some ways, in fighting for the equality of all in this province. I can only hope that all of us and all of our colleagues—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, obviously my question was to you: if you had contacted the minister before he released his latest statement, which contained unfounded, outrageous and insulting allegations about me and the Ontario PC Party.

Last night, you made a statement yourself on Twitter that said that the high road is always the best. But your minister furthered his attack with new insulting and absolutely unfounded allegations. His new statement was not in the heat of the moment; it was a carefully crafted public statement, and it was the furthest thing from the high road.

As Premier, if I had a minister who didn't apologize clearly and unconditionally and do the right thing, the minister would no longer sit in my cabinet. Premier, will you do the right thing?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: All of us in public life have an obligation to speak up when we hear or see homophobic attacks and smears. I've regretted the words that I've used. I walked the streets of my neighbourhood and I saw posters, and my family and my friends received flyers that I never have seen before. I used a word that I should not have used, and I have apologized very clearly. People do not—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We should not let that distract us from the real issue. Young people are killing themselves because they are unable to deal with the homophobic experience that they go through every day in schools. We, as elected officials, should be speaking to them so that we get—in the new program it gets better. We must stand up against homophobia.

Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: The problem is that in his non-apology, your minister has basically in-

sinuated that the PC Party—members of my team—are behind this type of garbage. That is an outrageous accusation for the minister to make—

Mr. John Yakabuski: And continues to make.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —and the minister may be continuing to make it in his media interviews.

The minister, further, last night was on Twitter and talked about how he was celebrating, wining and dining with venture capitalists in Montreal. I understand it was the minister's birthday, but I think that this reflects a minister who did not learn from this experience, is hardly humbled and is not sorry.

I would ask you Premier: Could we have a clear and unconditional apology from the minister for the accusations that he continues to make about the PC Party?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think the minister has made a couple of things very clear: first of all, that he regrets—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think the minister has made a couple of things clear. One is that he regrets the language that he used. Secondly, he feels very strongly and very passionately about an issue that should be important to all of us. I would encourage my honourable colleagues opposite to recognize that and understand that. There is no intention—I want to make this clear—on the part of our government or any member of our caucus to in any way assign fault or blame or use innuendo or any such thing to malign, defame, slander, undermine the official opposition. I want to make that perfectly clear.

There may be an opportunity for us today to actually come together and to make a statement that I think is important to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I'm pleased that you took my question there and expressed the sentiment. The Ontario PC Party obviously condemns this type of garbage in municipal campaigns and elsewhere.

Here's the issue: Your very own minister in his non-apology basically makes allegations, sets innuendo and lowers the bar even further by daring to suggest that anybody on our team, anybody in the PC Party, would be behind this type of garbage.

Premier, the minister should have done the right thing and apologized clearly and unconditionally initially, and he should apologize for the further smear tactics and innuendo that he put out in his non-apology. Will you call for that proper, clear apology?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've been pretty clear in terms of articulating the view of our government. I think that my honourable colleague should take some time to consider that. I consider the matter closed.

I think it's an opportunity for all of us to reflect on how important it is to be prudent in terms of weighing in on matters of public policy. I think it's an opportunity for us as well to understand that what weighs heavily on the minds of Ontario families today are issues like their health care, their education, economic anxieties that they may be feeling. I think we need to find a way to address

those. More than that, we need to find a way to address some of the concerns that are going to be raised by our newly elected councils around the province. I think that's what Ontario families would ask us to focus on. I think that represents progress on our part, to find ways to address those kinds of issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I want to bring closure to this issue. There is one way to rightly do so. If the minister had clearly and unconditionally apologized, the matter would be closed. But instead of apologizing, the minister continued to spread innuendo about our team and the Ontario PC Party.

Premier, I'm going to ask you very directly if you agree with the minister's latest accusations, that anybody on our team here across the floor was behind that garbage at the end of the Toronto municipal campaign.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've been pretty direct on that; I've been pretty clear on that. I just don't think it's helpful to dwell on it. We are at our best, on behalf of Ontario families, when we fully respect each other, and I think that's what we're called upon to do now.

There has been a transgression, a slip on the part of one of the members of my cabinet. There may be some people in the world who never slip and never make mistakes, but I have yet to meet any of them. I think the minister has done the right thing. He has apologized. I think our shared responsibility now is to find a way to work together on behalf of Ontario families.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Can the Premier tell us why he imposed his HST on Canadian Legions' poppies and wreaths?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, it has not been imposed. I wrote to the Royal Canadian Legion last week saying that we will refund the provincial portion of it. It does require a change in federal regulation. I've had a very good discussion with the federal finance minister, and I believe the regulation will be changed so this won't occur again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: When will the minister be writing to homeowners and apartment dwellers across Ontario and telling them that he will remove the HST from their electricity bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This is coming from a member who increased taxes on Ontario's people 56 times. He raised the sales tax.

His counterparts in Nova Scotia got elected saying that they would take the HST off of energy, and what did they do? They raised the HST. That member says one thing one day and does another thing when he's in government. That party has no principles, no plan for a brighter future for Ontario. We're about creating jobs—600,000 net new

jobs—for the people across Ontario, including Welland. Where do you stand and what's your plan other than to drive the recovery back into the ground because of ill-conceived and misunderstood economic priorities?

1100

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. We all know that our province has come through some difficult economic times. Some people estimate that as many as 30 million to 40 million people lost jobs worldwide.

Specifically, we know that lower mineral prices have had an effect on the state of the mining industry in Ontario, and especially in the north, where most of our mines are located.

Despite some of the tough times facing the mining industry, we know that recently there was good news that happened concerning the reopening of a mine. Can you tell us a bit about why this mine may have reopened?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank my colleague for the question. I know he's just as happy as I am, as we all are, about this very good-news story. Indeed, the mine that my colleague is referring to is North American Palladium's Lac des Iles mine, which is about 100 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay. I was able to attend the reopening on October 13, and let me tell you, the workers and the community are incredibly happy about this, and the company as well.

This reopening means that about 200 employees and contractors are going back to work, with a significant number of them working from Gull Bay First Nation, which has developed a very positive relationship with North American Palladium.

The president of North American Palladium, Mr. Bill Biggar, was very clear about his company believing that the life of the mine can be extended for about another 10 years. That's really in large measure because, even while they had to shut it down for a period of time, they carried on putting dollars into their exploration program, which allowed them to move the mine forward, reopen it and keep it going for another 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, thank you for that great news. I do understand that it looks like this mine has potentially another 10 years of life left in it at least and that there may be more major investment coming on the construction side of things in that mine as well.

While this is great news for the company and the community as well, I'm wondering what role our government had in ensuring that North American Palladium wanted to stay in northern Ontario to do business. The cost of doing business in the north, as everyone knows, is higher, and some companies view this as a disincentive. Will the minister please tell us a bit about how our government has created some incentives for these mining companies to stay in the north and what specifically we did to encourage North American Palladium?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much again for the question. He's quite right: The president of North American Palladium, Mr. Biggar, made it clear that indeed our northern industrial energy rate program that was announced in the 2010 budget was significantly helpful in terms of the reopening of the operation, as well as other incentives we've been able to provide. We've got some great good-news stories in terms of the mining sector all across northern Ontario, which we're excited about.

When we look at the northern industrial energy rate program, this is a three-year program—\$150 million a year, \$450 million over three years—which will work out to provide rebates of two cents per kilowatt hour, which in essence reduces electricity prices for these companies by up to 25%, making a substantial difference.

We had a previous program, as members will know, related to incentives for the forestry industry. The great thing about the northern industrial energy rate program is that it's now been expanded to the mining sector as well, which is making a huge difference in reemploying hundreds of thousands of northern Ontario residents.

AGENCY INVESTIGATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. It is rare for a government to be raided by the police. The McGuinty Liberals were raided at least four times as part of two criminal investigations. On July 15, police raided the offices of the Ontario Realty Corp. as part of what was reported in the media as a corruption probe. My question is, how many more criminal investigations are there against the McGuinty Liberals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. First of all, the Ontario Realty Corp. is not under investigation. There's a private contractor who's involved in it. The Ontario Realty Corp. has been subjected, as have other ministries, to new procurement rules over the last year and a half or two years, and they are impeccable rules. A significant amount of our procurement is done through Infrastructure Ontario, which has received international recognition for the openness and technical aspects of the procurement. So the member is wrong: The Ontario Realty Corp. is not being investigated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Trying back to the Premier: It seems coincidental that just before the raid in July, ORC did a sudden and major housecleaning, including getting rid of a vice-president in June. Somewhere, someone in the ORC knew exactly what was going on before the police knocked down the door. Either they briefed the Minister of Energy, who had responsibility for ORC, or the minister was negligent in his oversight of the troubled agency.

My question: When were you and the minister made aware of allegations of corruption against the Ontario Realty Corp.?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This is a government that respects public servants—we don't beat up on our public servants in public—and we're going to continue to do that. They were a government that embarrassed public servants. When they were in government, they did it. They're doing it in opposition. That's not the way we do business.

The investigation that they're referring to is an investigation in which they responded responsibly. They were asked to provide information for a private investigation for a private contractor. They did so, they did so professionally and they did so appropriately. We don't accept the premises of the question.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Ontarians, First Nations, environmental experts, mayors and US senators all oppose the transport of radioactive steam generators from Kincardine to Owen Sound on public roads and then across the Great Lakes to Sweden. Each generator exceeds acceptable safe standards for radioactivity shipped in one vessel. Does the Minister of Transportation support this unnecessary and dangerous plan which so many experts and community leaders oppose?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows full well that the rules and regulations fall within the federal government's purview.

Obviously we have regulations and safety precautions in the province of Ontario. All of those rules will be followed, but I think the fundamental question about the transportation and the disposition of these materials has to do with federal government legislation. I think that the member opposite would do well to talk with his federal counterparts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I think the minister may have washed her hands of this far too soon. First the Minister of Energy says that the shipment is a federal issue, even though low-level nuclear waste has always been a provincial responsibility, and now the Minister of Transportation says it has nothing to do with her authority, even though the Bruce Power website states that transport permits are required from Ontario's Ministry of Transportation and discussions are already being held with your ministry. That sort of seems to me, Minister, like you have some connection to this decision.

When will the government stop covering up their involvement on this issue and start meeting with local citizens, First Nations—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I will withdraw.

When will the government be open about this issue and start meeting with local citizens, First Nations and mayors who are so concerned about this proposed shipment of waste?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was quite clear that we will adhere to and we will honour the rules and regulations that are in place on behalf of the provincial government. We will make sure that every single one of those is followed.

We are absolutely committed to working in collaboration with all levels of government on an important issue such as this one, but at the end of the day, the overarching concern, the overarching issue of how to deal with the disposition of waste and the safety issues concerned has to rest with the federal government. We are partners, obviously, in the transportation; the roads are our responsibility. We have some of the safest roads in North America. We will keep them that way and we will work in partnership with the federal government.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Education. Parents in my riding have heard that there have been changes to how students can be graded in the classroom. There's been a clarification to how teachers can assess student performance. Parents are pleased that students are doing better in the classroom, but they also want to know that students have earned their success. What can I tell parents in my riding about this change and how these new policies are building towards our student success strategy?

1110

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted that the honourable member has brought to me the concerns of parents in his riding, and I want to say that I have heard from parents in my riding as well. Of course, student success is a goal of our government. We want more students to be successful. We have made significant investments to support their learning and to support teachers in the classroom. We have also clarified, as the honourable member has indicated, how students are assessed in the province of Ontario. It had been presented in some circles that students were not able to get a zero if they didn't complete work. Well, in fact, that is the case. Students can be assigned a zero if they have not satisfactorily completed their work.

This is important. Parents do want to be sure that the grades that their children receive have been earned, and we are very happy to continue to work with families. We also thank the teachers, who have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: My follow-up to the Minister of Education: Parents in my riding have also heard that report cards have been changed this year. They're asking what these changes are and what these changes mean. Parents want and deserve to be fully informed of their child's work at school, as it's fundamental to ensuring that students get the support they need both at home and at school to achieve success in the classroom.

Minister, could you provide some clarity as to how these changes are going to affect parents and students in

my riding? And is it true that parents will be getting less relevant information this year by sending students home with one less report card?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I think it's very important that I have the opportunity to clarify for everyone in this House that parents will receive three reports on student progress. The first report is a progress report, followed by two report cards.

The progress report is an assessment of the performance of students for the first few weeks of school. It indicates that the students are either progressing well, progressing or having some difficulty. The information that is going home to the parents is really very important. It's very clear. It provides an opportunity as well for parents, who are always interested in understanding how their children are doing in school, to go and meet with the teacher to talk about the progress of their child, the student, and to understand what strategies are in place to encourage and support the learning of that child going forward.

So there are three reports that are going—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is for the Premier about the leadership vacuum he has created. If Premier McGuinty needs a sign of what his lack of leadership accomplishes, he need not look further than Caledonia.

Don't take it from me; Christie Blatchford's new book charges that you abandoned the rule of law in Caledonia by favouring some citizens over others. While you said you don't interfere with the police, she cites examples of political meddling by your office that has hamstrung police and put abstract ideology ahead of protecting victims from intimidation, home invasion and assault. Caledonia families detail four years of suffering that you condone, with no end in sight.

What more evidence will it take for you to understand the impact that your failure of leadership has for Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, we've been working very hard with the Six Nations and with people in the surrounding communities, trying to further engage the federal government and our province to resolve the very significant underlying issue here, which is a treaty interpretation and a land claim that has been in existence for a long period of time.

We have been working very hard and will continue to work very hard, because the fact of the matter is that the people in the surrounding communities, together with those on Six Nations, have been playing together, working together and doing events and charitable causes together for centuries. They want a better future.

I'm looking forward to working with the new mayors and councils and Six Nations to find a very important resolution to this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: If your Premier needs another example of how lack of leadership is failing families, look no further than your inaction on the blockading by militants of a new power corridor from Niagara to Caledonia. No wires have been installed and no electricity is flowing. That's as bad as saying you have a long-term energy plan when you don't, or, as the Minister of Energy said on September 30, that you would release the new electricity price forecast analysis to Ontario families in mid-October when you didn't. Promise after promise is broken, deadlines come and go, and nothing happens. No one is accountable. It's a failure of leadership. Why does leadership mean breaking promises and breaking the law to Premier McGuinty?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We all recognize that none of these issues are easy to resolve; otherwise, they would have been resolved many years ago. They do require a lot of understanding. They do require a lot of discussion. They do require knowledge that has not always been in abundance. And there are many different potential approaches to issues which arise around land claims.

As a result of the Ipperwash inquiry and the recommendations that were made then, we are accepting and implementing the recommendations and following the advice and the approach, as a result of that very difficult, tragic event. That is the process we'll get to which will result in a resolution: discussions and peaceful approaches, and we need the federal government to seriously help resolve a land claim that they are ultimately responsible for.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On September 30, the minister announced approval of the WSIB's request to appoint respected academic and labour expert Harry Arthurs to the chair of the WSIB's funding review committee. Four other panel members were then announced. Would the minister please clarify which of these panel members is the injured-worker representative?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Yes, the WSIB has come forward with a plan to address the unfunded liability. Within that plan, they have put together an expert advisory panel that's being led by Professor Harry Arthurs. First off, Professor Harry Arthurs has been the dean of Osgoode Hall Law School, and he is a past president of York University.

Within that team that Professor Harry Arthurs has set up, he has some very strong people. I'll tell you, he has Buzz Hargrove speaking on behalf of labour, and with all his experience and the good work he has done with injured workers across the province and the advocacy he has brought to injured workers, I think that speaks volumes for part of that team. Also, I know that John Tory

makes up part of that team, and he is going to be giving advice and being—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I will reiterate for the minister. The funding review panel is comprised, it's true, of well-known persons. However, not one of these panellists is an actual injured worker, is someone who has gone through the WSIB system, is someone who can therefore truly represent injured workers in Ontario. In fact, one of the panel members had spoken out against such initiatives as the inclusion of construction workers in the WSIB.

Will this minister agree today to appoint an actual injured worker as a funding review panel member?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: When I have had all the opportunities to speak with injured workers—and I just met with them last week—we did talk about the consultation process and the openness that Professor Harry Arthurs has extended to all groups, especially injured workers. Injured workers have an open door to Professor Harry Arthurs and to Buzz Hargrove. If this member is saying he does not agree that Buzz Hargrove is an advocate, someone who has done so much for injured workers, we feel differently on this side of the floor. Injured workers are the cornerstone of what this consultation is all about. It's ensuring that the WSIB is there, that it is strong, that it is stable and will provide those protections for injured workers not only for the century that it has been in place, but for the next century. That's what I say to the member opposite.

1120

MISSING CHILDREN

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Child abduction is a serious and horrific crime. As a parent and a grandparent, I could not imagine the anguish and pain families must experience when confronted with these heartbreaking situations. My thoughts go out to all of the families that have dealt with these trying ordeals.

When combatting criminal activity such as child abduction, timely information is of the utmost importance, both to the police and to those members of the community who seek that help. Expeditious access and distribution of information is one of the most important tools to combat this type of appalling crime. However, the task facing law enforcement officials is large and complex.

Can the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services explain how this province is helping Ontario's police services in their fight against child abduction?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is correct: These are tragic circumstances. When a child is abducted, of course every moment is crucial to their safe return. It's vital to the search and investigation that critical information about the missing child is relayed to and from the public as quickly as possible. The Amber Alert program

is a partnership between the police and the news media to communicate vital child abduction information quickly to the public.

Amber Alert is run by the Ontario Provincial Police to locate children who are abducted. Since its introduction, the Amber Alert program's communication tools have expanded to include highway Compass signs, lottery terminals and Mac's convenience stores. When a provincial Amber Alert is issued, a province-wide media release is distributed by the OPP to advise of the alert and request that critical information be broadcast immediately and regularly until further notice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Pat Hoy: We as Ontarians are very grateful for the commendable services that are provided to us by all members of our police services. I know that in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, along with the rest of Ontario, the people are proud of those men and women in uniform.

However, public safety does not begin and end with law enforcement officials. It is crucial that the community work with police to help find a missing child. With a united effort by society, criminal activities like child abduction can be more effectively combated.

In the fight against child abduction, one of the most imperative tools is information. The truth is that the faster our police services can gain access to vital information, the faster they can facilitate the safe return of an abducted child.

Ontario's police service has access to some of the best resources, but they also need help from the public. Would the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services provide us with more information about how this will help fight child—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: On Friday, October 8, the Amber Alert program began teaming up with the social media website Facebook to broadcast Amber Alerts, and my colleague Mike Colle, my parliamentary assistant, was there to make that announcement. Facebook has more than seven million members in Ontario alone and many millions more outside the province. Through Facebook, Amber Alerts can tap into this vast pool of the public instantly.

Police believe the first three to five hours are the most important for finding victims of abduction. With the addition of Facebook to the Amber Alert program, police have a greater chance of gaining access to any information the public may have during these crucial hours.

Additionally, an agreement is in place with Canadian wireless telecommunications organizations to have a number of cellphone service carriers provide Amber Alerts via text messaging, free of charge. This expansion of the program is going to be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. On October 1, your WSIB raised premiums for over 100,000 struggling Ontario employers just as we were coming out of this recession. Just six weeks ago, you said, "We've got to be very careful about doing anything that acts as ... [a] spoke in the wheels of the economy that is recovering at a very modest pace."

Premier, isn't it a "spoke in the wheels" to raise WSIB premiums for auto manufacturers by 13.5% just months after you bailed them out with taxpayers' money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the opportunity to talk about the comprehensive plan that the WSIB has brought forward to retire the unfunded liability. When it comes to premiums, I'll let the member know—and he knows this already—that half of all companies covered under WSIB saw zero increase. Some did see a modest increase, and any company that did see an increase can lower their premium rates by getting involved in a number of incentive programs that are provided through the WSIB. Those programs allow companies to better their health and safety records so that they can lower their insurance premiums.

But the reason the WSIB needs to be there for those companies is to protect them from being sued and, if something were to happen, from it wiping that company out—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Premier, a month ago you said, "A hike in EI premiums at this point in time runs counter to what we need to do in order to ensure that people regain more confidence every day about a growing economy." I guess the Minister of Labour wasn't listening to that speech of yours, because on October 1, the WSIB hiked premiums for nursing homes by 17% and raised premiums for farmers by 20%.

Premier, why do you have it in for Ontario seniors and farmers? Why are you hitting them with yet another Dalton McGuinty tax grab?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member about the use of names.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The WSIB has brought forward a comprehensive plan, a prudent plan, a plan that will put the WSIB on a firm financial footing. This is what is needed. The WSIB, within this plan, has also put together a consultation that is happening with all stakeholders. It is being led by Professor Harry Arthurs.

I can see that the word "plan" is a four-letter word to that member over there, maybe because he has no plan and has never had a plan. What I can tell the member is that his colleague the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills said this is the right thing to do, having a plan and having a consultation.

So we support the WSIB in moving forward to ensure the stability of the WSIB, for the workers of this province

as well as for the companies; to ensure that they are insured and that when someone goes to work, they know that if something were to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

NARCOTICS SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

A month ago the government introduced Bill 101, the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act. Yesterday the bill was in committee, and it was obvious how poorly thought out and rushed this bill is. Somehow the government managed to forget that physicians practise in hospitals—it seems pretty obvious to me—that regulatory colleges already play an essential role in ensuring safety and that confidentiality of personal records must be maintained. There are far too many “oops” in this piece of legislation.

Given all of those oversights, can the Premier honestly tell Ontarians that he’s finally on target?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is picking on me today; this is her third question. But I never doubt her sincerity and how hard she works on her issues.

What I can say, of course, without being an expert in the area, is that we’ve introduced a bill. It is before the committee. It is there not in a perfect form. We are always listening. It may be that my honourable colleague or others want to introduce amendments to improve the quality of the bill and ensure that it achieves its objective.

I know my honourable colleague will understand that there is a real issue. It’s important that we curb the abuse of narcotic drugs and ensure that these powerful drugs are used appropriately. There has been a 900% increase in one drug’s abuse since 1991, and that’s why we are introducing this bill, in an effort to better manage these dangerous drugs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: In second reading, in committee and everywhere else I could, I urged the government to slow down, to get the bill right. I pushed for committee hearings in the north and in First Nation communities and was flatly denied, because the way the bill is written right now, it is a one-size-fits-all approach that won’t work for communities that are northern and rural, and it won’t work for First Nations either. But instead of listening to the many, many groups who urged the government to take the time to strengthen the bill, they are rushing it through.

People in mental health are working flat out. The one-week notice was not enough for them to respond, to come and do deputations or to send them in. They had one week. This is not reasonable.

Can the Premier explain why his government is ignoring the advice of all of these groups and is pushing through this flawed legislation?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We make a real effort to be open to constructive criticism and advice. My colleague referenced some concerns advanced by people in the mental health sector. Well, here’s what Dr. Catherine Zahn, who’s president of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, said: “Ontario’s narcotics strategy addresses the root causes of our province’s problems with prescribed opioids and other substances.”

Dennis Darby, the CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists’ Association, said this: “This strategy marks a step towards a more comprehensive approach to ensuring narcotics are prescribed and used appropriately.”

We don’t lay claim to introducing anything in a perfect form. We will continue to keep an open mind with respect to ways to improve this legislation, but I know my honourable colleague will agree with us that it’s important that we find a way to move forward to better control these dangerous narcotics.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Labour, and it’s about an important employer-employee health issue. Musculoskeletal disorders, commonly known as repetitive strain injuries, are responsible for over 43% of all lost-time injury claims in Ontario. That’s a huge number, and it translates into huge dollars. It’s estimated that from 2003 to 2008—that’s five years—Ontario employers paid more than \$1 billion in direct and indirect costs because of musculoskeletal disorders.

I understand that the Minister of Labour is taking a very serious view of that and that you have a heightened enforcement blitz addressing these hazards. Can you give me some details about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I can give details to the member about that blitz. It started in September, and it does focus on MSDs, musculoskeletal disorders, in sectors such as retail, construction, mining and health care. This blitz is one in a series of our highly focused inspections. It’s conducted under the banner of our Safe at Work Ontario strategy, and it helps workers and employers anticipate those workplace hazards that we all want to eliminate.

Inspectors, when they’re out there, are focusing on particular tasks. These are the tasks that require lifting or pushing or carrying items, and our government is committed to ensuring that workers are protected from injuries and major health hazards on the job.

Since 2003, we’ve been able to change and are working on changing the workplace culture—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Workplace pains and strains are very serious. They disable employees and they harm the economic efficiency of employers. The consequences are far-reaching for everyone. They’re very costly, in particular, to employers. There are a number of reasons for

lost-time claims related to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, resulting in these huge costs for Ontario employers.

Minister, what are you doing to help workers and employers prevent musculoskeletal disorders?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: When it comes to workplace safety, the starting point always must be education and awareness. That's what we're providing through the Ministry of Labour. That's why we've developed what's called a musculoskeletal disorder prevention series for employers and workers in Ontario. This helps workers and employers understand and recognize musculoskeletal disorder hazards in the workplace, as well as to control them.

MSDs are entirely preventable—we know this—and my ministry will continue to educate our workers and employers about how to reduce MSDs in the workplace. We've seen some really shining examples with companies out in the field that have seen very high incidences of MSDs and that have, in some instances, brought those injuries down in their workplaces to zero. This is good for everybody: It's good for the workers and good for the bottom line of a company.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning the WSIB review panel. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Sarnia–Lambton, we'd like to welcome Les and Marilyn Armstrong in the west gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BROCKVILLE FARMERS' MARKET

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm excited to rise in the House today to congratulate the Brockville Farmers' Market for being named Entrepreneur of the Year by the Leeds and Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre. The market has been a fixture on Market Street beside Brockville's historic city hall since 1832. In fact, it will mark its 178th birthday tomorrow.

For generations, the downtown market attracted people from across my riding and beyond to the shores of the St. Lawrence River to buy the fresh, local products

for which eastern Ontario is famous. Over time, as shopping habits changed, the market struggled to attract shoppers and vendors. It's not a stretch to say it faced an uncertain future.

If you know anything about the work ethic and determination in my riding, you can guess where this story is going. By using fresh ideas, recruiting unique new vendors and promoting the benefits of shopping for local produce, people such as Koren Manneck, Doug Avery and the late Peter Carter planted the seeds for an incredible turnaround. Thanks to their efforts and those of many others, the market is flourishing. In fact, it is now a key part of the economy in Brockville, as it draws thousands of shoppers to the city's historic downtown.

Although the outdoor season is ending, I urge everyone to see this success story for themselves by visiting the farmers' market inside the Brockville Museum on Sundays in November and Saturdays and Sundays in December.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The election of the new mayor of Toronto has reopened the Transit City issue. Toronto is choking on congestion. Finances are tight. The new mayor has said he wants to build subways and abandon Transit City's light rail system. Subways are very expensive.

The McGuinty Liberals chopped billions from their commitment to Transit City. The Premier says he's willing to talk. What else can he say? If he talks with the new mayor on this issue, he must remember that abandonment of Transit City and redirection of provincial funds to subway building would be a monumental mistake. Light rail would be the best value for money. Spending the same money on a subway would dramatically cut the amount of transit provided and deepen the congestion and air pollution problems of Toronto.

We need fully funded transit, and we need Transit City now.

OTTAWA GYMNASTICS CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to share a special anniversary taking place this weekend in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The Ottawa Gymnastics Centre is celebrating its 50th year of providing kids in our community with a rich, healthy, athletic and artistic experience through gymnastics programs, from toddlers to competitive Olympians.

The club has been home to two athletes who were part of the Canadian team at the 2004 Athens Olympics, and the current head coach at OGC, Tobie Gorman, was the team coach in 2004. The not-for-profit club was started in 1960 by Sev Heiberg and today is a thriving hub in Westboro community in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

The 50th-anniversary celebration is taking place in two parts this weekend. An open house will take place from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. this Saturday afternoon, October

30, at the centre—and I look forward to attending that—followed by a gala evening at Tudor Hall. The special guest at both these events is Dr. Steven MacLean, chief astronaut of the Canadian Space Agency and former Ottawa Gymnastics Centre member.

I'd like to congratulate executive director Kellie Hinnells and event chair Kathleen Murphy on organizing this special occasion. I would also like to extend my best wishes to all the OGC alumni, competitors, parents and kids as they celebrate their last 50 years this weekend and look forward to much success in the next 50. Congratulations.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad that the Minister of the Environment is in the legislative precinct, and I hope he's listening. Today, the Guelph Mercury reports that up to 1,000 people turned out in the rain to protest a proposed wind farm in Centre Wellington township last night. I was there, too, arriving as soon as I could to hear what my constituents were saying about the wind farm proposal and about the McGuinty government's energy policies.

I listened to many constituents, and their message was a devastating indictment of this government's refusal to listen to them before permitting the installation of massive wind farms in their communities. People told me the McGuinty government has stripped away their say as average citizens. They believe this government's Green Energy Act has stripped away local decision-making authority. I believe they are right.

Again, I call upon this government to complete a comprehensive and independent study of the wind turbines' effect on human health before any new wind farm proposals go forward.

Again, I call on the Minister of the Environment to account for his contradictory statements on the role municipalities play in the approvals process. Do municipalities have the power to stop them or not? He should address this basic question right here in the Legislature.

Despite this government's apparent determination to push ahead with wind farms no matter what the cost, no matter what the opposition, there is hope, because when a community is united and when it speaks with one voice, that voice is heard and it cannot be ignored.

HUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to report that significant progress is being made on the new state-of-the-art hospital that will soon serve the residents within my riding of York West. Three requests for proposal have been shortlisted for the design, build and financing of the additional Humber River Regional Hospital development project. In addition to the local site located in York West, this new hospital will provide modern equipment for better diagnosis and treatment, increased

patient care with additional beds and specialized outpatient services.

I am proud that our government continues to stand by its commitment to quality health care for all Ontarians. This additional hospital will continue to reduce wait times in this province, expand services and create more jobs for nurses.

Since taking office, the McGuinty government has built 18 new hospitals, which not only provide us with better health care services but also create jobs and opportunities which benefit all Ontario families.

I'm looking forward to the positive impact that Humber River Regional Hospital will have on the local community. These economic and health benefits for local constituents help build a healthier, stronger and revitalized York West.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I rise today to focus the attention of the House on the ongoing problem of bullying in this province and throughout North America.

1510

I had the opportunity to meet with Mike Neuts this morning, whose son, Myles, tragically lost his life more than 10 years ago. As a result of Myles's premature and tragic death, Mr. Neuts today travels to schools throughout Canada to speak out against bullying. I'd like to thank him for his efforts in raising awareness about how serious a problem bullying is and focusing on preventing it.

The meeting was timely, since bullying awareness and prevention week in Ontario, which was established by my private member's resolution earlier this year, will take place during the third week of November.

Bullying, whether it is verbal, physical, or cyberbullying, which has the potential to be especially detrimental since it is virtually impossible to escape whether you are at home or at school, continues to be a very serious problem in our schools. We must make every effort to stop it.

I hope that the Minister of Education has given very clear direction to schools and boards throughout the province not only to recognize this week but to ensure that every school has a safe school team and that every safe school team in the province has been involved in directing the development of activities for their school during the week. Let's stop bullying.

ROTHWELL-OSNABRUCK SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to acknowledge Rothwell-Osnabruck school in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, eastern Ontario's only kindergarten-to-grade-12 school, whose Interact Club raised \$650 for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

The Interact Club hosted a Dining in the Dark event in April of this year, where guests were required to eat their meals in complete darkness. Tickets were sold for \$10 each and guests were served a buffet-style meal including

homemade dishes such as lasagne and scalloped potatoes. Then the lights went out.

The event was designed to encourage people to reflect on their vision health while raising critical funds and awareness for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. This was a great learning experience for the students and staff.

To thank the Interact Club for their support, Canadian National Institute for the Blind representative Nicole Gerhold visited Rothwell-Osnabruck school on September 29 and presented students with a certificate of appreciation.

I congratulate the students from Rothwell-Osnabruck school in Ingleside on going above and beyond in every respect by living the Rotary Club motto of "Service above self." Volunteerism in my riding is alive and thriving, and it is important to recognize and congratulate those who have achieved and done something that stands out, such as what these students have done with the Dining in the Dark project.

I applaud the students and teachers involved in the Interact Club at Rothwell-Osnabruck school and I encourage them to continue to support and serve their community. This is an outstanding school in the Upper Canada District School Board.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr. Rick Johnson: Today I rise in the House to speak on the issue of early childhood education. It is a subject that I'm proud to speak to as a member of the McGuinty government, which has not only recognized the critical importance of this issue but has followed through. Full-day kindergarten is a part of this, and the McGuinty government has invested \$200 million into this program.

Starting early, doors can be opened. We have within our hands the ability to change the lives of children in this province for the better. By investing in our children now, we're investing in their future.

It's also an investment that can create jobs now. The Second Career program has enabled many who are out of work to unlock their potential, and it will be an important path for new early childhood educators. As a result of this program, more than 700 Ontarians have been retrained as early childhood educators: jobs today and possibilities for our children tomorrow.

We know that investing in children today is not a frill. It's not some shiny new car, as the Leader of the Opposition and his party believe. Not only does the Leader of the Opposition oppose full-day kindergarten, but he and his party have opposed Ontario's landmark Second Career program. By denying our youth opportunities to succeed, the party opposite and their leader would have denied the opportunity for new jobs to be created in this field.

This is a time for leadership, and the McGuinty government is delivering.

GREEN ENERGY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Green energy in Ontario is already making our air safer, cleaner and easier to breathe. The McGuinty government understands that every dollar invested in green energy also creates new jobs for Ontarians and builds a new industry in this province.

Already, the Green Energy Act is attracting investment that is putting Ontarians to work. New solar module and mounting facilities are bringing 375 jobs to Windsor. Solar panel and inverter manufacturing facilities are creating up to 800 jobs in Guelph. A thousand people will be employed because of a solar manufacturing hub in Welland.

In my community of London, Canasia Power Corporation has announced plans to locate a 125,000-square-foot manufacturing plant that will start producing solar panel parts by early next year. They are bringing 300 jobs to London, plus additional opportunities through research and partnership with the University of Western Ontario.

These are just some of the 50,000 jobs that the Green Energy Act is projected, directly and indirectly, to support. That's 50,000 Ontarians who will be working in a new, growing, worldwide industry in our province—and our province is poised to be the leader in this regard—50,000 Ontarians who, if the opposition parties had their way, would remain unemployed.

I want to congratulate all the people working in this area to create jobs for Ontarians and making our air safer and cleaner and easier to breathe.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Tonum Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 101, An Act to provide for monitoring the prescribing and dispensing of certain controlled substances / Projet de loi 101, Loi prévoyant la

surveillance des activités liées à la prescription et à la préparation de certaines substances désignées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD CARE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to celebrate our province's dedicated child care workers and early childhood educators. Today marks the 10th annual Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day in Ontario. Today we recognize the important role that child care workers and early childhood educators play in the development of our children and of our communities. It is a day to show our appreciation for the countless hours they spend enriching the lives of our children. We congratulate these professionals for being true leaders in early learning.

Child care workers and early childhood educators are valued partners in our government's ongoing efforts to build a strong publicly funded education system and an accessible, high-quality child care sector.

Chaque jour, ces personnes s'attachent inlassablement à fournir des soins de qualité aux enfants de toute la province et à favoriser leur développement physique, intellectuel, social et créatif.

With passion and commitment, they work hard to give children the foundation they need to reach their full potential and contribute to our success as a province. Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day is a great opportunity to celebrate these contributions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, the professional association for ECEs in our province. This year, the AECEO celebrates their 60th anniversary. Thank you to the AECEO for the important work that they do in supporting Ontario's early childhood educators, and congratulations on this significant landmark anniversary.

Today, early childhood educators are also working alongside teachers in full-day kindergarten classrooms.

Ce programme pionnier est en train de donner à nos plus jeunes apprenants un excellent départ à l'école en les préparant pour la première année et la réussite future.

This year, more than 1,400 early childhood educators are working in nearly 600 full-day kindergarten classrooms across our province. At full implementation, up to 20,000 newly trained childhood educators will be an essential part of our full-day kindergarten program.

1520

To meet the growing demand for early childhood educators, our government is pleased to offer opportunities for people to enter this rewarding profession. Over the past two years, nearly 700 people have returned to school to pursue careers as early childhood educators through our Second Career program. Through their training and work experience, early childhood educators acquire in-depth knowledge of early childhood development, observation and assessment. That knowledge is critical in full-day kindergarten classrooms where they work side by side with teachers to support children as they start a lifelong journey of learning.

Ce partenariat est un élément essentiel de l'objectif de notre gouvernement, à savoir la création d'un système intégré et continu d'apprentissage et d'éducation en Ontario.

Child care is now the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Bringing child care and education together in one ministry supports better coordination between the two systems, emphasizing that learning begins long before a child steps into a classroom.

We will continue to work closely with child care workers and early child care educators as we move towards realizing our early learning vision. Today we thank the child care workers and early childhood educators in our province for their dedication and hard work with our children. Through your work, you are giving children a brighter future, giving families the support they need and building a stronger Ontario for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus to extend, on this 10th anniversary of the celebration of the child care worker and early childhood educators, our appreciation to them for the work they do.

When I was doing a little research, I came across the fact that in the United States they have been celebrating child care providers and having provider appreciation day harkening back to 1996, when it began in New Jersey. So, obviously, there are many people who have appreciated the outstanding contributions that have been made by these very hard-working child care workers.

Certainly, the individuals I know, I can tell you, have a very profound and extremely important role in the development of our children. I can attest to the fact that the people I know are very dedicated; they are very passionate professionals who every day enrich the lives of the children they serve through their steadfast commitment to embodying many of the virtues and characteristics that we would hold dear. They're very positive role models.

We know it is important to invest in our children and, of course, the child care workers and the early childhood educators in many respects are the caretakers of the investment that we make in our children. Of course, we want the best for our children, and they try to provide the best.

We actually put a huge responsibility on the shoulders of the child care workers and the ECEs. We entrust them

to care for and educate our children, to offer them leadership, tolerance of other people, understanding and knowledge. Again, we do owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

I have to add, however, that if you took a look at the newspaper today, there is some concern about the uncertain future that some of the child care workers and early childhood educators are facing in our province because of the way in which full-day kindergarten has been implemented. There is certainly some concern being expressed about whether or not we'll be able to meet the demands, and also the fact that in our daycares, many of the child care workers and early childhood educators are leaving. It's a mass exodus because they can get better-paying jobs and benefits within our schools. We have a situation right now that is certainly causing some concern, and we've heard those concerns expressed today. So I would encourage the government, as they roll out full-day kindergarten, to take into consideration the impact it's having on the long-established, highly successful child care organizations in our province that may no longer be viable in the future. I urge the government to get it right, to determine the best approach and to make sure that our child care providers, our ECEs and our children are not paying the price for the implementation, which is causing concern.

We hear today from Fred Hahn, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, who is concerned about the supply of early childhood educators. We heard today from Andrea Calver, of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, who is also concerned about where the staff is going to come from. She says the province doesn't have a plan.

I end by congratulating the outstanding child care providers and early childhood educators. They make a great contribution. They are there for our children, and we just wish them nothing but continued success, happiness and satisfaction in the job they do every day for our children.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to rise today to recognize the 10th anniversary of Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. I will start by thanking all the hard-working child care workers and early childhood educators in every daycare, classroom, nursery school, after-school program, community health centre and early childhood education program for the hard work they do. I want to acknowledge some early childhood education workers and programs, specifically in my riding.

I will start with the Walden Day Care Centre, located in Lively, which does tremendous work to allow the people of Walden to go to work every day. I want to thank the workers at Teddy Bear Day Care. This is a daycare run by the First Baptist Church in Garson, in my riding. It's a non-profit, full-family centre. I want to thank the workers at Cotton Candy Day Care in Chelmsford.

J'aimerais également reconnaître toutes les éducatrices de la petite enfance ainsi que les travailleuses en garderie qui travaillent à la grandeur de l'Ontario. Merci pour le travail que vous faites.

J'aimerais plus précisément reconnaître certaines garderies et certaines places de travail dans mon comté. On regarde, entre autres, à toutes les garderies qui sont gérées par le Carrefour francophone. Un grand merci à tous ceux qui travaillent avec le Centre pivot du Triangle Magique. Merci à la Boussole des tout-petits à Azilda, à la Découverte des tout-petits à Val Caron, au Foyer des tout-petits à Hanmer, ainsi qu'au Pavillon des tout-petits à Chelmsford. Merci beaucoup pour le travail que vous faites.

Every Ontarian understands the importance of high-quality child care. Research shows the economic return of child care programs: For every \$1 we invest, we get \$2.42 back—a good return on investment, if you ask me.

Every Ontarian who has ever had a child in a child care program knows that a dedicated, well-trained child care worker or early childhood educator makes all the difference in your child's experience of this program. That is why it is so important that we take the time today to acknowledge the work these early childhood educators do, day in and day out.

It is sadly no surprise to anyone that child care workers and early childhood educators in this province continue to be undervalued and underpaid. It is a workforce that is made up mainly of women. Even after all the battles for equality and equal pay for work of equal value that we and our foremothers fought before us, women continue to make less than men. In Ontario, women make 71 cents for each dollar a man would for work of equal value.

1530

When it comes to a workforce made up largely of women, this gender imbalance is even more apparent. The NDP has been fighting alongside groups like the one we saw this morning, CUPE, the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, and many other groups who share our view that the accessibility of high-quality child care should be a right to every Ontario family. But today we are far from achieving this goal. There is lots of work left to be done.

The McGuinty government is in the process of implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. This is something that the NDP supports. But we fought for a better, more comprehensive plan that would have been in line with what Dr. Charles Pascal has put in his report. We know that Ontario full-day kindergarten requires an additional 20,000 early childhood educators within the next five years. But where are those educators going to come from when there are no plans in place for them? Early childhood educators are an essential part of the government's plan for full-day kindergarten, but the need for those workers and the profession as a whole continues to be ignored by this government.

Il est important de se rendre compte qu'on a besoin d'éducatrices de la petite enfance si on veut que les programmes de maternelle à temps plein et de garderie avant et après l'école deviennent réalité. Il est temps d'avoir un plan concret pour s'assurer d'avoir la main-d'oeuvre dont on a besoin.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have received a number of petitions from the Haliburton area supporting my private member's bill.

"Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

It's no surprise I support this petition.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and certified by the Clerk.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Kim Craiton: I want to thank Sister Heather Kelley from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Local 171, in Fort Erie. The petition reads as follows:

"Temporary Replacement Workers

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I have signed my signature in support of this.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Emmett.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Carina.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Sylvia and Helmut Gotz of Peterborough, 271 Collison Crescent. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition and give it to page Kieran.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm bringing in a petition from Lynn Perrier in support of Newmarket MPP Frank Klees. The petition goes as follows:

"Petition for Provincial Oversight of the OSPCA....

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support my constituents who signed this petition. I will affix my signature and give this to Priscile.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed these laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers' legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Harnameh.

1540

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This is a petition from my constituents in Ottawa Centre.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I affix my signature and send it to the table via page Priscile.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it and give it to page Calder.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas people need teeth to stay healthy; and

"Whereas a lack of universal dental care has resulted in an epidemic of poor dental health, and many people are living and working with no teeth; and

"Whereas there is only very limited support for denture care for those on social assistance and no support at all for the working poor;

"Therefore, we call upon the government of Ontario to increase funding to assist people on social assistance and the working poor to access denture care."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Kieran.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to

proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislature in support of Bill 100, paved shoulders on provincial highways.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this bill, I affix my signature to it and send it down with Carina.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I want to thank Joanne Hannah for submitting this petition to me. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas grandparents often become a family's first reserves in time of crisis. Grandparents act as fun playmates for children, role models, and family historians, mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children;

"One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship;

"Also, in cases of the death of a parent," the maternal or paternal grandparents' child, should continue to enjoy access to the grandparent "by the living parents, as visitation and access was fully established prior to the death of the parent;

"In Canada, the issue of grandparents' rights of access to grandchildren has not been given recognition in legislation, with the exception of the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and BC. In all other provinces, grandparents may only petition the courts "for rights to access as interested third parties. In the absence of a specific statute providing grandparents with legal standing to access, there are continuing difficulties in obtaining contact with grandchildren;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That grandparents have legal rights to access to visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent, and we support Bill 22," as introduced by MPP Kim Craitor.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the McGuinty government to make the terms of the Samsung contract—known as the Korean green energy investment agreement—public, including performance indicators, penalty provisions, any dates either side can terminate the contract with or without penalty, who signed the contract, who negotiated the contract or lobbied for the contract on the government's behalf, any subsidies included in the contract, and the total cost to ratepayers. Addressed to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day motion number 3. Debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The \$7-billion Samsung contract is a sweetheart deal given to a foreign-based conglomerate and not offered to Ontario companies. It is a deal that pays foreign-based Samsung \$437 million in subsidies over and above what it receives in its multi-billion-dollar secret contract, a contract that does not contain a single job guarantee.

Sadly, Ontario ratepayers, Ontario families, know little about this deal because the important details are being kept hidden, secret from the energy industry and secret from the Ontario families who will end up paying the bill at the end of the day. It is a deal that will force Ontario ratepayers to pay a lot more for a long, long time and it is a preferential, sole-source deal that may be in violation of Ontario's procurement rules.

Friends, I will tell you today, here and now, that an Ontario PC government will release the full details of the Samsung subsidy deal and hand it to the Auditor General for a full evaluation. We will let the Auditor General get to the bottom of this deal to see the real impact on investment, on the power sector and on Ontario families who get stuck with the bill.

When Premier McGuinty began his expensive energy experiments, he opened up the grid to allow more renewable energy projects. Ontario companies began lining up to take advantage of the offering, and then the McGuinty Liberal government let Samsung cut right to the front of the line. In fact, they politically interfered: They directed their own Ontario Power Authority to ensure that Samsung received preferential treatment when it comes to transmission capacity, prices and access. Let me re-inforce that: You had Ontario companies that were able to do the work and that were ready to do the work, and the McGuinty government ensured that Samsung received preferential treatment when it comes to trans-

mission capacity, prices and access. They directed their own Ontario Power Authority to make that so.

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This preferential treatment has been roundly condemned by leaders in the energy sector, including the Association of Power Producers, the Canadian Wind Energy Association and the Canadian Solar Industries Association.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Conversations outside.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Society of Energy Professionals president said of the Samsung subsidy—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): If members have a conversation, they're invited to take it outside. Thank you.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Society of Energy Professionals president said of the Samsung subsidy, "This is no way to build an electricity system," and, "This will be very, very expensive...." The Ontario PC caucus agrees.

Premier McGuinty's energy experiments, from his smart meter tax machines to time-of-use rates to the Green Energy Act and the Samsung billions of dollars in subsidies, are causing electricity bills to skyrocket across our province.

In Ontario homes today, hydro bills are sitting on the kitchen table for days and days on end because seniors and families are afraid to see how much more those bills have gone up due to Dalton McGuinty's expensive energy experiments, and you can't blame them.

Electricity rates are already up 75% under this government. Add in the impact of the HST and the backdoor energy taxes and other rate hikes, and the annual cost of electricity bills for Ontario families is set to increase by an additional staggering \$732 a year by 2015.

Ontario families deserve a break. They're looking for change. A PC government will give Ontario families the break they deserve and need.

Friends, a PC government will offer that change. We will take our province down an entirely different path than the one we're on today. Our approach on energy will be rooted in accountability to the consumer, the family and small business, to put them at the top of energy policy.

We believe that government decision-makers should work with the energy sector to set out the policy framework and then leave it to the sector to implement and execute and get out of this day-to-day, seat-of-the-pants, to-and-fro, back-and-forth mismanagement that we're seeing under the McGuinty government and his Minister of Energy.

Quite frankly, the Samsung deal is the complete opposite of the right approach. It is a hands-on, preferential treatment that makes foreign multinationals the winners, and Ontario businesses and families end up the losers.

An Ontario PC government would level the playing field where all companies can compete fairly and transparently.

In a very different approach to the McGuinty government, we will restore the Ontario Energy Board's ability to act in the best interests of the consumer. We will create a dedicated consumer advocate at the Ontario Energy Board to represent each and every day the rate-payers of the province and fight for them against the out-of-control policies of the McGuinty government.

We will give families a choice on whether time-of-use pricing works for them or if they want a regulated rate that will benefit seniors, families with young and school-aged children, and those who have to work nights or weekends and split shifts, because not every family conforms to Dalton McGuinty's definition of an ideal family. Somebody has to stand up for the senior whom Dalton McGuinty is lecturing to do her laundry at midnight. Somebody has to stand up for the family whom Dalton McGuinty is telling to have all the kids clothed, showered, fed and ready for school by 7 a.m. Somebody has to stand up for the shift worker who can't take a day off work to do the chores. The Ontario PC Party will stand up for those families in our province. Under a PC government, no more cutting untendered, sole-source, sweetheart, multi-billion-dollar subsidy deals with foreign-based conglomerates and then, as the Liberals did, keeping the details secret. That kind of backdoor deal-making will come to an end.

Until that time, first, we need to shine the light on this backroom Samsung subsidy deal. I urge all members of the House to listen to Ontario families, to listen to the small businesses concerned about what this deal is going to mean to them. How much will it cost them and how many jobs will be taken out of Ontario and sent overseas? I hope the members, if they actually believe in this deal—and I think many members of the government actually do not, based on media reports. I ask them to stand in their place and to support this motion so we can find out exactly what the secret Samsung subsidy will cost Ontario families. Release the details of the Samsung deal to industry stakeholders who have been denied their opportunity to compete, based on special treatment to the foreign multinational corporation.

I call on the members to stand up and be counted. Release the details to all members of this House who have been kept in the dark and, most importantly, release the details of your secret subsidy deal with Samsung to Ontario families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of New Democrats, I am pleased to be able to take part in this debate. While I will disagree with members of the Conservative Party in respect of many aspects of electricity policy, there are issues in this motion that do need to be addressed.

Ordinarily, an organization like the Ontario Power Authority could be brought before a legislative com-

mittee, the legislative committee on government agencies, and could be asked questions about this deal and other deals. But the Liberal government has worded the legislation governing the Ontario Power Authority such that, unlike the Liquor Control Board of Ontario or the Law Society of Ontario or the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario—unlike 200 other government agencies—the Liberal government will not allow the Ontario Power Authority to be brought before a committee of the Legislature to answer legitimate questions about how much people are going to have to pay on their electricity bills for deals like this. If you can't bring the Ontario Power Authority before a properly constituted legislative committee to ask and answer the kinds of questions that Ontario electricity consumers deserve to have, then we have to have a motion like this.

I don't think there's anyone in this province who is opposed to green energy. I think, again, that's a motherhood and apple pie issue. People want to see more green energy. But people also want to know what is in the deals or the deal—in this case, this particular deal—and what it is going to cost people across Ontario.

We know the big numbers: We're talking several billion dollars. We know that there are some parts of the agreement, though, that the government refuses to disclose to the public. We know, for example, that there are add-ons. We know, for example, that a special deal has been cut with respect to making transmission capacity available. How much is that going to cost? How much are the add-ons going to cost? And at the end of the day, what is this going to do to the average person's electricity bill?

1600

Just to give you some comparisons, we're told that Samsung is going to get in the range of about 13 and a half cents a kilowatt hour for any wind power that is produced. I think the average person in Ontario needs to know that, for example, wind power is being brought on stream in our sister province of Manitoba for less than six cents a kilowatt hour. I think people want to know—or ought to know—why they are going to be paying 13 and a half cents a kilowatt hour under this special deal with Samsung when, in our sister province in Manitoba, it's less than six cents a kilowatt hour. How is it that wind power can be brought on stream in Texas for six cents a kilowatt hour, yet under this special deal with Samsung, they're going to get over 13 and a half cents a kilowatt hour in Ontario? I think people who are already having trouble paying their electricity bills—people who have to choose between “Do I pay the heating bill? Do I pay the hydro bill? Or do I cut back on food on the table?”—need to know how much this is going to add to the hydro bill. What is this going to mean for them?

There are other aspects of this that are equally troubling. One of them is the fact that, as we all know, there are new companies in Ontario that want to grow, that wanted to be a part of this, that wanted to have an opportunity to bid into the so-called green energy market, and that have been told as a result of this, “Sorry, folks,

no opportunity for you.” We already know that there are other interests, other producers of green power who would like to have access to the transmission grid, but because of this special deal that basically says, “No. This space on the transmission grid is reserved for Samsung,” those companies are told, “No, there is no opportunity here for you.”

I think even more disturbing to people is this: We have companies in Ontario—one of them is called Ontario Power Generation, which has incredible expertise in terms of developing electricity resources, and Ontario Power Generation is owned by the people of Ontario. Why would a Liberal government cut Ontario Power Generation, which has historical knowledge, historic ability in this province of developing electricity generation—why would they literally say that Ontario Power Generation can have no part of this and is legislatively excluded from developing wind power or solar power? I think people need to have an answer to those questions.

There is an economic aspect to that, because we’ve already seen where water power facilities, power dams that were owned by Ontario Power Generation and were generating electricity at one or one and a half cents a kilowatt hour, were sold off to private generators, and those private generators are now getting in the range of 10 cents a kilowatt hour. Believe me, this has a huge impact on people’s electricity bills. If we were developing wind power and solar power on a not-for-profit basis through Ontario Power Generation, we would be able to save the electricity consumers of this province a lot of money on their hydro bills—an awful lot of money on their hydro bills. Is the Liberal government doing that? No. What they’re doing is literally loading up the trough for a foreign-based corporation, to the exclusion of Ontario companies and at the expense of people who are already having a hard time paying the hydro bill.

This is a government that goes on and on, in press release after press release, about openness and transparency. Well, this is a multi-billion-dollar deal that Ontarians are going to pay for through the hydro bill for not five years, not 10 years, not 15 years, but more than 20 years.

If this government believes in openness and transparency at all, it should open the books on the agreement that it has signed with Samsung, the multi-billion-dollar agreement. That’s all New Democrats want.

Ontario Power Generation has to come before a legislative committee, and they have to answer questions. If they’re digging a tunnel in Niagara Falls for more hydro power, they have to come and answer questions. If they’re doing nuclear refurbishment at Darlington, they have to come and answer questions. They have to talk about how much it’s going to cost and they have to talk about how long it’s going to take. Similarly with Hydro One: If Hydro One is going to build new transmission lines, they have to come before the government agencies committee and answer questions. How much is it going to cost? What are the future costs going to be? What would it save us if we practised more conservation and

energy efficiency such that we didn’t need this transmission line? They have to come and answer questions. Why is the Liberal government doing this deal with Samsung in the back room, without transparency, without openness, and setting it up in such a way that neither the Ontario Power Authority nor this government can be questioned as to the legitimate issues that electricity consumers in Ontario need to know about and ought to know about?

New Democrats will be voting for this resolution. We’ll be voting for it because there is no defence for this kind of backroom deal, which is going to force Ontario electricity consumers to pay through the nose for years and years to come at a time when this could have been done differently, could have saved people money and could have gotten us, New Democrats argue, an even better result.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is a motion that is an absolute delight to stand and speak to.

I guess if you oppose the generation of electricity unless it’s by burning fossil fuels, the best way to secure your choice—and if your choice is to kill all forms of non-polluting energy, that’s basically what this one is all about. It is in fact the “drown green energy in paper” resolution.

The PC energy harangue—it would be inaccurate indeed to call it a policy—is a confused mishmash of contradictions, platitudes and non-statements, so let’s sort it out. Let us sort out what exactly the PC energy strategy is. It actually has four pillars: (1) blame the Liberals; (2) do nothing, and run your generation and transmission infrastructure into the ground; (3) burn coal and ignore the consequences; and (4) buy electricity on the US spot market and add the bill to the stranded debt that the Conservatives created and dumped on Ontarians. Those are your four pillars of the PC energy strategy.

It’s instructive to ask where exactly Ontario was when voters, in their righteous indignation, ushered the Progressive Conservative Party out of power in 2003. We lived on the knife edge of rolling blackouts. The system held together only because the Progressive Conservative government of the day bought power on the US spot market at prices that are between 50% and 150% higher than those paid to the highest feed-in tariff contracts, those of solar power. They added \$1 billion in pointless debt to your electricity bill by just tacking it on to the stranded debt that they themselves created when they broke up the old Ontario Hydro into Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One, and they had the Ontario taxpayer assume the debt that the former Ontario Hydro used to offer in bonds, whose interest was paid mainly to Ontarians. That’s the thing that’s on your bill. Listen carefully to the debate and look at the people who created that thing on your bill.

They created Hydro One to transmit electricity and Ontario Power Generation to generate electricity and then hid them from scrutiny by the Auditor General, so that

the pledge in this resolution to have the Auditor General review the Samsung contract rings awfully, awfully hollow.

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The opposition's conduct while in government is perhaps an example of what their conduct would be in the future. Let's have a look at the past and see if it's instructive. Paul Rhodes, Leslie Noble, Tom Long and Michael Gourley shared \$5.9 million in untendered contracts from Hydro One under the former Progressive Conservative government for everything from communications advice to training programs. And these individuals were well-connected senior advisers to the Progressive Conservative government of the day. In many cases, Hydro One couldn't find any evidence of any work done for the money that they paid.

I have a very instructive booklet here, and it's called "Building Ontario's New Foundations: Energy for the Future." I believe it's a draft of the Progressive Conservative energy policy. I think it's time to have a quick look at it. I just wish there was a little more time to deal with it.

Let me quote verbatim. They claim their policy is, and I use the words in the document exactly, to "invest in demand management to shift peaks in consumption to off hours." That's time of use. If you believe in time of use, why won't you vote for it when it's offered to you? Our government has offered it. This is part of what you claim in your own document, that, as a party, you believe in in your document, but you won't vote for it in the Legislature.

I think they really owe Ontarians an explanation.

But here's why you're not going to get that explanation. I'm going to quote from the document again. It says, and here are the words exactly: "Finding the right balance of generation sources is a difficult proposition." They don't know how to do it. Ontario has got a plan to secure our energy future now and in the decades to come, and this motion here, which says, "We want to take a part of that critical component of our energy future, which is green energy, and we want to stall it in legalistic red tape; we want to drown it in paper," is typical of a party whose only solutions to Ontario's energy problems are (1) blame the Liberals, (2) do nothing, (3) burn coal, and (4) buy power on the spot market. They don't know how to do it.

Here's one that I think Ontario really ought to hear. They say, and let's use the words again exactly: "Natural gas-fired generation will play a targeted but critical role in meeting Ontario's energy needs. Gas-fired generation has a number of attractive features: It can be built quickly"—listen carefully now—"it can be located to relieve transmission bottlenecks; and it can be used for district energy and cogeneration." Hey, Oakville, guess who's bringing back the natural gas plant. Hi, Mississauga. Guess what you would be looking at if that party over there ever again assumed power. Burning natural gas—unbelievable; absolutely unbelievable.

They talk here about the subject of their own motion, wind power. They talk about wind power. I'm looking

through this document to say, "Show me, somewhere, what your plans are for wind." They talk about surveys from the Canadian Wind Energy Association, they talk about wind power becoming increasingly competitive, and then they say, "Until actual wind generation information from provincial resources is available, the capacity and energy contributions from these projects," blah, blah, blah. In other words, "We have no intention of ever building it, but until the data from having built it are available, we won't make a decision on wind power." This is the whole point and purpose of this ludicrous motion, and that's one of the reasons why this particular motion is not going to win support in this House today. Like everything in the Progressive Conservative energy platform, it is contradictory; it makes no sense whatsoever. It comes down to the same status quo, do nothing, buy power on the US market, blame the Liberals and burn coal solutions that Ontarians said no to seven years ago and will say no to next year. No sensible nation on the face of this earth has ever and will ever embrace a policy as silly as that being offered to Ontario by the Progressive Conservative Party.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for remembering the name of Thornhill.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: And you did.

I can refute the last eight minutes by saying this simply to open, and that is, the only reason that the government of Ontario today, the Liberal Party of Dalton McGuinty, will vote against this motion is because that government doesn't want to release details of this deal because they're covering up the details of this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Thornhill, I'd just ask that you temper the language to a parliamentary tone.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw that term.

The only reason that they don't want to vote for this motion is because they don't want the details of what they've negotiated to become public.

I am pleased to be on my feet in the House today in support of the PC caucus motion calling on the McGuinty government to open up the books on the Samsung deal. Do you know, the term "Samsung," where I come from, has become a verb? When you open your electricity bill, you look at it and you say, "Goodness me, I've been Samsunged." I've heard it, knocking on doors in Thornhill.

If the McGuinty Liberals are creating any jobs with this, they're overseas. This deal is not a real deal if its details cannot be disclosed. Ontario taxpayers are footing the bill for it. Ontario taxpayers are the people who supplied the money to fund this deal, and Ontario taxpayers have a right to know the details of this deal.

My position personally, and certainly the position of this caucus—and let's deal with this and not everything. This mega-sole-source contract—my position is well-known in this House. I was driving home—I remember

this well—from Niagara on the day that the announcement was made; I think it was in January. I listened to it on the radio and I couldn't believe my ears. We've done a sole-source deal with a company overseas that, while well-known for its computer products and televisions, has built only one wind turbine, at that point on test in a field in California, and that's what we're going to turn over our wind industry to so that the McGuinty government can have a legacy. I was shocked. A Tim Hudak government will not make any deals like this, and we will get to the bottom of this one.

To begin with, we would not have addressed renewable energy, which my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville was talking about, in this way. You want to know, sir, how we would address it. I could start with, for example, the fact that while George Smitherman was looking at wind, Quebec was signing a deal with Vermont and New Hampshire to supply 225 megawatts of hydroelectric power, the most amazing renewable source of power in the world, at six cents per kilowatt hour for 25 years—225 megawatts.

Where were we? Why weren't we spending Ontario taxpayers' money making the connection, if you will, as opposed to tilting at windmills, which we did? We instead signed up for \$7 billion with Samsung, plus the subsidies, so that Samsung could build a wind business on its behalf and we could pay for it.

If we were in the business of looking at wind, why were we not talking to other companies that had developed expertise? Siemens would be an example, General Electric would be an example. Go to Denmark, where they do so much on the wind front. But at what cost, you still have to ask?

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We are still in the midst of this wrong-headed Liberal policy of picking winners and losers. Samsung won and we lost.

The true role of government in the critic portfolio that I wear, economic development, should be to create conditions for success, and the conditions for success will attract unilateral corporate interest and private interest in investment in our province. That's how you do it. You put in the appropriate tax incentives, special assistance to promote particular kinds of investment you want. You don't hand off to one company the job of fulfilling what you want to create so that you can have a legacy or say that you're in the renewable energy business. You talk about not having a policy. In there, my friends, you hear the makings of a reasonable policy in developing renewable energy that is affordable.

Ontarians strongly suspect that the Samsung deal does not pass the smell test. We know that it was, for example, a huge question mark in, of all things, the Toronto mayoralty debate, where it wasn't discussed because it wasn't appropriate to the municipal discussion. People don't know where the levels of government change from one to another. But I assure you and I assure the government that this will be a major talking point as we move toward the election in October 2011. This deal

never should have happened, but at the very least you should be voting in favour of exposing it to the public here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Kenora—Rainy River has already made it very clear that New Democrats support this resolution—we'll be supporting it in the vote later today—and are extremely troubled at the government refusing to be even dragged, kicking and screaming, into revealing what is at the heart of this deal. We know there's a whole lot of money involved. You know that, don't you? It's not just thousands; it's billions of dollars involved here—a whole lot of money. You know that when you've got millions and billions of dollars involved, you've got the prospect of corruption. The public will draw the appropriate inferences in that regard from the refusal of the government to reveal—this isn't a deal. We talk about a deal. This is an arrangement. You talk about a deal when you get a good deal. You get a deal. This isn't a good deal. It's a good deal for Samsung—no two ways about it.

This is what's frustrating. This is the problem. You do an FOI request for the arrangement and you get—I'm going to recycle this paper because, Lord knows, we paid for it. You've got to pay for freedom of information. We can put this right back in the photocopier because it's blank page after blank page.

So, we've got a couple of issues here. One, you've got a government that's making a mockery of freedom of information. You've got a Dalton McGuinty government that assured and promised voters that it was going to be more transparent, that it was going to be more accessible. Here you have a government that is stubbornly refusing to let the people of Ontario know because the people are going to pay every penny of the billions of dollars involved here. Make no mistake about it.

As if people aren't hurting bad enough already. Heck, we've got HST added to electricity bills. We've got electricity bills rising because of the not-so-smart meters and so-called time of use. Then we've got HST added to that, and you've got electricity bills just skyrocketing for family after family, and people finding it increasingly more difficult to live in their own homes.

Those rates are going to be even more shocking come the winter months when the furnace motor is turning on and off, because what we do know is that the two biggest electricity consumers in the house are the refrigerator motor for the compressor and the furnace motor. So people ain't seen nothing yet, as has been pointed out so many times during the course of question period and various comments on various pieces of legislation here in the chamber.

Heck, especially when you're up north, when you're up in northern Ontario, you have no control over the weather, over the temperature. You can't say, "Well, we'll only turn the furnace on for a couple of hours at so-called low-demand times." You've got some whacky propositions out there about telling people to save their

laundry for Saturday. You might as well save your bathing for Saturday, too. As the member for Timmins—James Bay said, “When are kids supposed to do their homework? Are they supposed to do it at 11 o’clock at night so they can do it in low-demand times? Gosh. It’s incredibly arrogant and pompous, isn’t it, on the part of this government?”

There are going to be a whole lot of folks on the government side who are going to understand viscerally the meaning of the word “hubris” in relatively short order. They’re going to be like Icarus, and they will find that plummet to be a breathtaking one on, I suspect, October 5 or 6—less than a year away; less than 12 months away.

I find it troubling that this government, when it is so incredibly unpopular with the people of Ontario—and it is—digs its heels in on this rather modest proposal. Gosh: Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians say it’s harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. Good grief. That means only 14% don’t think it’s harder now than it was two years ago. And gosh, if there’s a margin of error of, let’s say, four points, it could be as many as 90%—or I suppose the Liberal caucus members might take some comfort in the fact that it’s only 82%. But then, even more striking, 76% of Ontarians say they would like to see another party in power. When you’ve only got 24% of the population, you don’t get—heck, there’s going to have to be some sort of bizarre fourth-party status designed for the few Liberals who find their way back, and I hope some do. I find some of them rather delightful people. Not all of them, but some of them are rather delightful people.

So I can’t understand, for the life of me, why the government is not only digging its heels in but then engaging in this incredibly partisan attack on the official opposition, as much as saying to them, “How dare you bring this motion to the floor of this chamber? How dare you?”

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Because it doesn’t make sense.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That’s what the member from that riding says. The member from that riding who just interjected, whose interjection is now on the record, clearly doesn’t understand the issue here. He just can’t make sense of it, and I understand that. I appreciate that he has difficulty making sense of this.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Revealing things to the public and removing the veil of secrecy wouldn’t make sense to a Liberal.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course not. The member from Renfrew interjects.

So it’s not only a matter of simply not supporting the motion; it’s then engaging in these partisan attacks on what is a most non-partisan motion. As a matter of fact, I’m disappointed in the Conservative caucus. This is an opposition day. We have a scarce supply of opposition days. I usually see the official opposition Conservatives coming forward with far more partisan opposition day motions, calling for the fall of the government and calling for the resignation of a particular cabinet minister, the cabinet minister of the day; whoever happens to have been twittering or tweeting.

So you have the most benign of motions here, the most non-partisan of proposals, one where we could even bridge that huge gulf between the left-wing New Democrats and the right-wing Conservatives and find common ground. Who’d have thought? Who’d have thought that the Conservatives could come forward with something so benign—and I don’t want to belittle the phrase—so commonsensical that even the New Democrats join with them? The Conservatives here have bridged the gap, and somehow the Liberals want to be the fifth wheel here. They want to be the odd person out. They also want to keep Ontarians and, most importantly, Ontario’s electricity consumers in the dark.

Take a look at the little bit that we do know, and that is that Samsung—it got a deal. Make no mistake about it. The taxpayers of Ontario didn’t and the electricity consumers didn’t, but Samsung got a deal here; got the deal of a lifetime. It’s going to be paid 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour for the wind power it produces. But, heck, compare that to the real world, and we find that in Manitoba, for instance, it’s less than six cents a kilowatt hour for wind power. In Texas, down in the United States, again, less than six cents a kilowatt hour for wind power. Yet Samsung cut itself some slick sweetheart deal here with a promise of 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour for wind power.

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And then solar power—wow. Solar power: almost 45 cents per kilowatt hour. Forty-five cents per kilowatt hour: Do you know what that’s going to do to your electricity bills? Because the folks who are watching this and the folks who are paying close attention to this whole issue know darn well what has happened to their electricity bills already, never mind when they start forking out almost 45 cents per kilowatt hour. You might as well get rolls of toonies and just keep feeding them into—it will be like playing a slot machine to keep the electricity on in the house, to keep the fridge going. People are being ground to the ground by the McGuinty Liberals here at Queen’s Park, and now they find—look, I know the phrase “cover-up” is unparliamentary, which is why I’m loath—and not even just loath; I’m disinclined—to call this a cover-up. But it’s obvious that the Liberals are concealing—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The details of the deal.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —the details of this arrangement, this sweetheart deal by Samsung. The Liberals haven’t even been able to utter the notorious observation that this was not a tendered deal; this was a sweetheart deal. This deal involved an awful lot of pillow talk, but I’ll tell you who’s going to get the shaft at the end of the day: It’s going to be electricity payers, electricity consumers.

The Liberals, in the course of this afternoon’s debate or during the whole course of this scandal of the sweetheart deal with Samsung, are thoroughly disinclined to mention the name George Smitherman. Now, it seems that everywhere Mr. Smitherman has gone, the people of Ontario have had to pay out big time. Whether it’s a billion plus on an eHealth scandal or then millions and billions more on eHealth, the sequel—that’s the scandal,

of course, that's ongoing now with respect to consultant and lobbyist fees, and we're going to get around to consultants and lobbyists, because you can draw the obvious inference that there were a whole lot of consultants and lobbyists involved in this sweetheart deal with Samsung. We'll get to that in just a minute or two or three. Obviously, the people of Toronto don't trust George Smitherman with their budget, with their hard-earned tax dollars. I say that the mere fact alone that this deal was spawned by George Smitherman should cause concern.

I am amazed that Liberal backbenchers—because Liberal backbenchers don't know the details either. They've not been told. They've not been told what the blank spots are all about. They've not been told what the guarantees are in terms of revenues and profits for Samsung. They've not been told how the deal came about. They're in the dark. They're being given the mushroom treatment. And you know what that is, don't you, the mushroom treatment? The Liberal backbenchers, even as caucus members who are expected to support that government, the Liberal government, are being denied even the most basic details around the Samsung deal.

It seems to me that the Liberal backbenchers should be mad as hell. They should be outraged. They should be ticked off. I understand that they're in ill humour, because when 76% of Ontarians say they want to see another party in power, it means that, well, a whole lot of folks across the way here, Liberals, had better start preparing resumés. There are places downtown that hire daily—private manpower places where you show up at 6 in the morning and you can get hired on for the day. I don't know whether some of them will find themselves lining up at 6 in the morning, but then that would involve work, which is problematic as well. Because, again, as I've had occasion to tell people, there's not a whole lot of heavy lifting that goes on around here. It's not particularly dangerous work. The occasional paper cut and the more than occasional bruised ego are the extent of the injuries that politicians suffer on the job.

We—this Parliament, this assembly—should be able to speak as one voice calling upon the government to release details of this sweetheart deal with Samsung. The motion calls upon the government to make the terms of the Samsung contract public, again, particularly with respect to performance indicators—in other words, just how sweet was the deal? Was it just a spoonful of sugar or was it a huge dump truck full of sugar to sweeten it up?—penalty provisions, any dates either side can terminate the contract with or without penalty, who signed the contract, who negotiated the contract, and also, very importantly, who lobbied for the contract on the government's behalf.

We've got other legislation that's before this assembly that deals very specifically, the government says—they purport that it deals specifically—with the scandal around high-priced, well-connected, politically connected lobbyists and consultants. And you know darn well that a sweetheart package like this Samsung deal wasn't put together without the participation—expensive participa-

tion—of high-priced lobbyists and consultants. You just know darn well that that didn't happen. And it didn't happen without more than a few high-priced dinners and more than a few bar tabs that would shock the average Ontarian, because at these high-priced dinners, nobody's drinking the stuff out of the plastic bottles; it's the high-end stuff that's being consumed.

So you can bet your boots that lobbyists were involved here. You can bet your boots that lobbyists are still involved. You can bet your boots that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wonder if there was money put into the mayoralty campaign.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, an interesting observation that my colleague from Renfrew makes. “Hmm,” the member for Welland says. How interesting. Because, of course, that's right: Joe Pantalone disclosed his contributors a week ago, before the election in Toronto; Rob Ford disclosed his financial supporters and contributions; but George Smitherman didn't. Hmph. I don't know how Hansard's going to do a “hmph,” but I think it's h-m-p-h, or something to that effect. Hansard understands a “hmph” when they hear one. But hmph, Smitherman didn't disclose his.

I suppose the point at which it is disclosed—that is to say, Smitherman's bankrollers, the people who were bankrolling his unsuccessful campaign—I suppose it would be interesting to see.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Spectacularly unsuccessful.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It is noted.

I suppose we'll see just how intimate the relationship was, and still is, between Samsung and the people who sold the sweetheart Samsung deal to cabinet and to the Premier's office. Because that's how it happens, right? Even if you are the Deputy Premier, or were the Deputy Premier, you don't just say, “Here it is.” You've got to sell it to the Premier's office. Sometimes that means wining and dining people in the Premier's office, the political staff there. Sometimes it means leaning on the Premier. Sometimes it means calling in chits. Sometimes it means calling in favours. Sometimes it means persuading the Premier's office that the gravy train is a long one and that it could well extend into political contributions, come the next provincial campaign. I suppose Mr. Smitherman's list of bankrollers will shed a little bit of light on whether or not there was any sense of quid pro quo—you know the old “I'll scratch your back; you scratch my back” syndrome—and find out whether there was any ongoing quid pro quo.

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Let's put it this way: Can a member of the government caucus stand up today and tell us why pages 19 and 20 of the contract, as obtained through freedom of information, are totally blank? Don't tell us what's in them, but tell us why. Or, why do pages 17 and 18 have just a couple of little brackets in “e” and brackets in “d”?

There's a phrase that's overused: a redacted document. It's a misused phrase; people should understand that. Technically it's applicable, but it's a censored document. That's more accurate: censored. Not redacted; censored.

People should be careful. “Redacted” has become a catchphrase word. It’s not quite as irritating as “fulsome,” but almost. You don’t have a redacted document; you’ve got a censored document. So tell us why, when the people of Ontario—taxpayers and electricity consumers—are paying for every penny of this sweetheart deal, they don’t have a right to know.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It seems simple.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It seems indeed, to the folks out there.

I’ve got to caution some of my hubris-riddled colleagues here that the province of Ontario does not begin and end at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor. You know that. You come from all different parts of Ontario. I know you’re less likely and more reluctant to go home on weekends now than you ever were, and when you do, you want to roll a boulder in front of the door and put blackout curtains on the windows, and if there’s a knock at the door, you’ve got to hold the dog’s mouth so it doesn’t bark and someone knows that anybody is home.

We’ve all done it. You’ve all done it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Park the car down at the mall and walk home.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, that’s right.

You’re sitting there casually and you hear a knock at the door and you say, “Honey, turn down the TV and turn the lights off. Maybe they’ll go away.” I understand that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What are they going to do on Hallowe’en when all the trick-and-treaters are walking around?

Mr. Peter Kormos: You want to talk about tricks and treats? There’s a whole lot of trickery in this sweetheart deal with Samsung, and it’s no treat for electricity consumers.

People already feel burned by the Liberals when it comes to electricity—burned big time. Electricity rates are climbing—skyrocketing—through the roof with their so-called smart meters; over \$1 billion worth of smart meters being installed. Who do you think pays for that? Of course, it’s Jane and Joe who pay for that: hard-working folks who have just lost their good industrial value-added manufacturing jobs, those wealth-creation jobs like the 900 John Deere employees down in Welland or the Union Carbide employees. Heck, the list goes on and on—300,000 across Ontario, and perhaps even more. The ones who have been lucky enough to find new employment are working for \$10, \$11 and \$12 an hour, and maybe that’s part-time and maybe it’s not—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There was an interjection coming again from the member from Renfrew. I’m not sure what he’s referring to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Maybe the minister is tweeting.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He notes.

People already feel burned big time. It’s not just burned. It isn’t just an annoyance. It’s fearful and fear-some. You’ve heard the leader of the NDP in question period after question period talk about real folks who

have been sending us emails and letters and phone calls; people from every part of Ontario—big city, small town, rural, urban, northern, southern; people frightened to open the hydro bill. They leave it sitting on the kitchen table or on the kitchen counter. They start to open it and put it down, because they’re afraid of what they’re going to discover once they open that bill, once they pull the tab of that envelope.

People in Ontario know that it’s the McGuinty government’s not-so-smart meters that have forced hydro bills up. Add to that the HST, a brand new tax on electricity that has never existed before in the province of Ontario, and you’ve got electricity rates that are insufferable.

People have already learned, at least down where I come from, that you don’t leave lights on when you leave a room. People have already learned that you turn the thermostat down if you’re not going to be home. People have already learned that you don’t keep opening and closing the fridge door. The pages learn that. They learn that from their parents, and they learn that as much, much younger kids. How many times were the pages told—they didn’t have to be told too many times, “Quit opening the refrigerator door. What are you doing—trying to cool the outdoors?” So our youngest citizens know about preserving and conserving electricity. But there’s only just so much you can do. We’ve heard tragic stories about people on life-sustaining equipment that uses electricity, and they can’t choose to turn it off. Do you understand what I’m saying? They don’t have that choice.

As I say, as the winter months approach, don’t forget, there’s a whole chunk of Ontario—down in southern Ontario, we take natural gas for granted—a huge part of Ontario that relies on either propane, and they’ve got to deliver it; or oil, but you can’t run a kitchen stove on oil; or for heat as well as cooking—electricity.

And how many apartment dwellers are in electricity-only units, because they were cheap to build? The developers built them with electricity, and quite frankly, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, heck, hydro needed cash flow, so they were advertising, “Live better electrically.” Ontario Hydro was promoting it. At the moment, as I say, they needed the cash flow.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hot water: People bathe and take showers; kids bathe and take showers. You have to wash dishes, and you have to cook with heated water.

For the life of me, I don’t look forward to the next several months as our constituency office is going to be burdened, because people are angry, but they’re also, more importantly, afraid. Do you understand what I’m saying? They’re scared, desperate, and the ones I talk to say that an election in October 2011 is not soon enough. They would gladly agree with the proposition that we should do it sooner rather than later, because they’re scared, and it’s not false fear; it’s legitimate fear.

The income here in this chamber is—what?—a minimum six-digit income for members, unfortunately not for

the biggest chunk of the staff, who work very, very hard. So maybe it's hard for some folks who are here in the chamber to understand what it's like to live on \$22,000 a year. Down where I come from, people live on that, and not just single people. People raise kids on less than \$22,000 a year, they do, and by God, they do a pretty good job of it too.

I'm not talking about people making \$100,000 plus, \$120,000, \$130,000—the Premier's salary, I don't know what that is—\$160,000 or \$170,000 a year. I'm talking about seniors who live on less than \$1,000 a month. They do. I'm talking about young families who work hard and do all the right things and don't break laws and still find a little bit of money to contribute to the church plate when it passes on Sunday morning, if that's when they go to church.

The Liberal government's attack on those people, by virtue of the increased electricity rates and the even higher electricity rates that are going to flow from the sweetheart deal with Samsung, is going to force people out of their homes. It's going to create homelessness. I've talked to a few city clerks, people in the treasury departments in city halls around Niagara. They've never seen a higher rate of tax default. You've got three years; you can be in arrears for three years before the city lists your property as a tax sale. These people tell me that they've never seen higher rates of tax defaults. Nobody wants to lose their home in a tax sale. People are hoping against hope that somehow, something will happen. Well, it will happen. It will be an election in October of next year.

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People are saying, "I've got one year. I will not pay taxes. I've got to pay these other bills," and they're getting further and further behind. I'm told that never have people witnessed as high a rate of unpaid property taxes. This isn't by scam artists; it isn't by people who are, by nature, defaulters.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It affects the municipality's budget.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right: Municipalities are then left having to borrow money instead of—bank interest rates are low for municipalities. But then, municipalities find themselves, hoping against hope, up against the debt wall.

I want to hear from more government members. As a matter of fact, I'm going to relinquish the floor so that we can hear from government members. I want them to explain why they're happy that their Premier won't let them know what's in this sweetheart deal with Samsung.

Just what about "Ignorance is bliss" do these Liberal members find so delightful? How is it that they feel they can be true to their constituencies, their voters and their electorate and not join in this call for clarity and transparency, the transparency that Premier McGuinty promised? Why, for the life of me, would Liberal backbenchers not use this opportunity to perform their role? Their role is to keep an eye on the executive of this province, an eye on the government. Just as it's the opposition's role to play

an oversight role, it's backbenchers' role to keep their Premier's office in check as well. I, for the life of me, don't know why these caucus members on the Liberal benches are believing their Premier, House leader etc. who rail at them during caucus meetings, telling them, "Don't worry; everything's going to be all right." Everything is not going to be all right, friends. Everything's very, very bad, and the news is not good; it's very, very, very bad news. Premier Dad is no longer Premier Dad; he's Premier Bad, in the views of 76% of Ontarians; 76% of Ontarians say it's time for another party to be in power. Come October 2011, I'm sure that will happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up to speak to the opposition day motion and learn about the Samsung deal.

When I came to this chamber, I came with an open mind. "Yes, there are good questions. Let's go listen to them and see what they have to offer." Everyone should know. I learned, after I did a lot of research, that every person from the public, every stakeholder, the opposition party and the third party have a right to know about the details if they apply for freedom of information, and they can get the information; they can get the details. In the meantime, they came to this House talking about nonsense, trying to confuse the people out there. I know that that party, the opposition party, the party of darkness, put Ontario in the dark in 2002-03 because they didn't invest in energy; they didn't invest in new generation.

Due to the energy act, I think we're creating more than 50,000 jobs. We're allowing the people across the province of Ontario to participate: in my city of London, Windsor, Welland, Kingston, Ottawa, Guelph and the north, every spot across the province of Ontario. Many different Ontarian companies are participating in the Green Energy Act and are creating clean energy for the people of Ontario. They're giving them the chance to have clean air. They can breathe, be healthy and also save our environment.

I know the opposition party has no sense of business. That's why they're driving business away. Also, the third party, the member from Welland and the member from Kenora—Rainy River, spoke for a few minutes, talking about creating generation. When they were in power, they drove out the deal that would connect us with Manitoba to create a good energy—

Mr. Jeff Leal: The Conawapa project.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, 100%. What happened to it? They killed it. They have no interest in creating jobs. That's why, on this side of the House, we strongly believe in clean energy. We strongly believe in attracting business to this province and helping companies to come and invest in Ontario.

It's important to keep the lights on. We are the party of light; they are the party of darkness. It's clear to everyone across the province of Ontario, from the speeches in this House, who supports them, who is trying to create jobs for them, who's trying to keep the lights on for them.

We believe in seniors. We believe in working people. We believe in hard-working Ontarians who on a daily basis are working to provide for themselves and for their families. They deserve to have the lights on. They deserve to utilize our energy. They deserve to have clean energy. They deserve to go outside in the garden or walk in the street and breathe clean air. That's what we're trying to do.

I know that the opposition party doesn't like to see that. They are jealous of the creation of jobs. When I looked at the record, as a result of the clean energy act, I saw a lot of job creation, from Welland to London to Windsor to Ottawa to Guelph to Peterborough—every part of the province participating and helping us to create clean energy to provide for the people of Ontario.

That's why, when I came this afternoon to the House with an open mind to listen to the opposition party, I said, "You know, they have legitimate questions on why we don't open it up." What I discovered is that every person has the right to apply through freedom of information and get the details. They get all the information. I was shocked. What are they talking about? What are they asking about? They just want to stand up in their place and bash the government, because when they were in power, they did nothing. They put Ontario in the dark. When the third party was in power, they cancelled all the contracts; they cancelled all the deals with Manitoba to give us cheap energy. Now they're standing up in their places and telling the people of Ontario wrong information about the future of our green energy, about the future of this province. After listening to them, I am now a stronger believer in our energy act.

That's why I'm going to vote against this, because you know what? They offer nothing. They talk about nothing. There's no substance.

Interjection: No policy.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: No policy—nothing; no vision for the people of Ontario. I was hoping, when I came this afternoon, to listen to the opposition party tell me something substantial, something with some substance in the opposition motion. Do you know what? Honestly, when I come here every day, I would like to listen to the opposition, to know a little bit more about their side, about their story, to make decisions. But tonight it was clear and obvious: They didn't offer me anything. They didn't tell me anything.

Also, the opposition party, talking about openness, about being open to the people of Ontario—we learned a lot from the party in Ottawa, when they signed a \$16-billion deal to buy planes. There were no details. People didn't know what they were signing for. They paid \$16 billion, the Conservative party that governs this nation. They signed a lot of deals with no clearance, with no details.

Interjection: Was it \$16 million?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It was \$16 billion: B, not M.

Now the opposition party comes into this place talking to us about openness and being open with the people of Ontario. We are the most open government. We are

honest with our people. We are the people who try on a daily basis to attract business to this province, to attract companies to come and help us to build this province and create good jobs. If we had listened to the opposition party, we wouldn't have 50,000 jobs in clean energy. We wouldn't see the lights today. We would be walking in the dark. That's what you'd like to do.

We are the party of light and the people; and they, the party of dark.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to join the debate and support PC leader Tim Hudak and my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who is our energy critic. As part of this motion, we have called, and I believe rightfully, on the government to provide us in the chamber, but also all Ontarians, a list of who lobbied on behalf of Samsung or other special interests as part of the green energy investment agreement.

The reason we have done this, whether you're in Nepean–Carlton or the whole city of Ottawa or anywhere else in all of Ontario, is because our constituents have several and serious questions about this deal.

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Not a single lobbyist is registered on the Ontario lobbyist registry to lobby the government on behalf of Samsung. We have a lot of questions about what this deal is, who made the deal and ultimately, why it was signed. It's simply inconceivable that a deal of this size and scope was made completely in secret without Samsung lobbying the government for this special, sole-sourced contract. PC leader Tim Hudak will often say that this is the largest sole-sourced contract in history since the pyramids were built. The Korean green energy investment agreement, the Samsung subsidy deal, is a sole-sourced \$7-billion deal that sprung up literally out of nowhere.

Our Truth in Government Act that I personally put forward in May last year and that was introduced, but voted down by the government, would have required the government to make all contracts over \$10,000 available to the public: posted online on a government website. In this case, we're talking about \$7 billion, not \$10,000, and it's \$7 billion that is being spent outside of the province of Ontario. In contrast to the \$10,000 limit we were putting forward in the opposition, this \$7-billion deal comes and we don't know who negotiated it, who pitched it or any of the other important details, including performance indicators. That's why we're asking for the Liberals today to come clean and provide us with that list of who lobbied.

It's also, we believe, a reason why—and I'll use this quote—members of the cabinet so-called "gang-tackled" former energy minister George Smitherman, according to a Toronto Star article of October 28, 2009, when they learned of the deal. The Star also reported that ministers feared that the deal would "mean billions of dollars in subsidies to Samsung." That means Ontario dollars being exported out of this province into another country

altogether. That's a shame. Even members of the Liberal caucus were shocked when the details started to emerge.

On January 23, 2010, the Toronto Star ran a story about the Samsung deal quoting several angry Liberal MPPs. We'd like to know who they are, but they were all anonymous at the time. Let me read into the record the quotes from members of the Liberal Party, many of whom are probably in this chamber today.

On January 23, they said, "We're afraid it's going to blow up in our faces—just like the HST." They said, "People were"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On a point of order, the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm told that it's correct parliamentary procedure that when you name members you have to identify ridings, not just in a general way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Yes. I'm listening, and I didn't hear any name mentioned. If I missed it, I apologize. Continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm really pleased that the member for Peterborough is paying attention, because it could have been him who said, "People were"—and I can't say this word—ticked off "that there was no chance to discuss this. Zero. We didn't get to talk about the pros and the cons. (The Premier's office) basically said, 'Here are the talking points; end of story.'" End of story. That's from a Liberal MPP.

Of course, my personal favourite—and I have no idea which Liberal MPP said this, but it's a tongue twister for sure: "The morale in caucus is lower than a gutter snake ... on a back country road."

I can understand why Liberal MPPs showed up here today to continually try to cover this deal up: because they're scared—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Nepean—Carleton, even the way you said it I could see it coming. So withdraw, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw, but the reality is, we have serious questions on this side of the House. They may not want to share them, but I am going to ask them anyway, so here they are. How can this Liberal Party say to us that not a single lobbyist registered on behalf of Samsung in the entire lobby registry? The McGuinty government must come clean today and they must release the details of this deal. The people of Ontario expect it, my constituents expect it, and they will adjudicate on your behaviour come October.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me an opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

It has been amusing to hear the oppositions members' journey through fantasy land through this whole debate. Let me get one fact straight, because I've heard it again and again and it's absolutely, factually incorrect: Samsung is investing \$7 billion in Ontario. Let me repeat, because this is a very important fact: Samsung is investing \$7 billion of foreign investors' money right here in Ontario to create jobs for Ontarians. That is a very

important point. If I would have told you, those who are listening from home, that a company is investing \$1 billion in Ontario, you would be saying, "Wow, that's great." If I would have said a company is investing \$2 billion in Ontario, you would have said, "That's great—creating jobs, especially in these tumultuous economic times." In this instance, Samsung, a foreign company, along with a consortium, have decided to invest \$7 billion in this province to create 16,000 jobs. That is what this agreement is about, and we, collectively, should be very happy. We should be excited. We should be applauding this great investment that is being made in our province to create new jobs for hard-working Ontarians. We should be very, very excited about that. We should not be criticizing that.

As a result of this investment, not only will Samsung be creating 16,000 jobs, they will also be creating 2,500 megawatts of wind and solar power. That is putting clean energy in our supply mix. That's what we are talking about. And it is as a result of the Green Energy Act that we are creating these jobs, that we have created such an attractive environment for investment in this province that you've got companies from around the world investing to the tune of \$7 billion. We should be very careful, other members should be very careful how they cast that money.

We can already see what these investments mean. Just yesterday—and this is an interesting fact; members may not know this. Just last night, we had the highest record of wind energy production in the province of Ontario. You know how much wind energy was produced last night in Ontario? One thousand and fifty-six megawatts of energy was produced, clean energy which we will be consuming.

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: That's two Pickering reactors, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville tells me. That is the kind of investment that we are making.

But Samsung is not the only company that is creating jobs because of green energy. There are a lot of Canadian companies also creating jobs in communities that you and I collectively represent. Let me state some of them. Solar module and mounting facilities located in Windsor are creating 375 jobs. Solar panel inverter manufacturing facilities in Guelph are creating 800 jobs. A solar panel manufacturing facility in Kingston is creating 1,200 jobs. A solar semi-conductor plant in Oakville is creating 200 jobs. And here's my favourite one: In the great riding of Welland, represented by member Peter Kormos, solar manufacturing is helping to create 1,000 jobs. I want to know if the member for Welland is against these 1,000 good-paying jobs that have been created in his community because of the Green Energy Act. In London, 300 jobs; Sarnia—Lambton, 800 jobs; Kingsville, 300 jobs; Lakeshore, 300 jobs; Timmins—James Bay, 800 jobs; Niagara Falls, 230 jobs; Leeds—Grenville, Middlesex, Oxford, Simcoe, and Lanark, about 2,500 jobs.

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I can go on and on, and you can start adding this up. These are good jobs that are being created right here

in our province, and what we should all be doing collectively is that we should be cheering on these jobs. We should be doing the work necessary here to make sure that these jobs come to fruition and actually create green energy for our province of Ontario. This is a win-win for our province. This puts us—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I ask the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to come to order.

Mr. Paul Miller: I just asked a question.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, now I've answered it. So come to order.

Mr. Paul Miller: You're always picking on me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You don't even know what "picking on" is, I'll tell you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, I do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just try me.

Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I just want to say in conclusion that I think this is a win-win situation for our province, that not only will we be creating green energy, a clean source of energy for our youth while making Ontario a leader in the generation of renewable energy, but we're also creating good 21st-century jobs for good, hard-working Ontarians. Thousands of jobs have been created.

That is what the Samsung agreement is all about. It's an investment of \$7 billion in the province of Ontario. We should all agree and applaud that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to speak to this opposition day motion today, which basically calls upon the McGuinty government to make the terms of the Samsung contract public, including performance indicators, penalty provisions, any dates either side can terminate the contract with or without penalty, who signed the contract, who negotiated the contract or lobbied for the contract on the government's behalf, and subsidies included in the contract and total cost to ratepayers.

When I consider what has happened regarding the Samsung contract, I look and I see the worst part about debating something like this Samsung subsidy deal is that we know nothing, absolutely nothing, about what's in the deal, and we have absolutely no information as to whether or not it is in the best interests of Ontario families and businesses. However, most people now would recognize and say it is probably not in the best interests of Ontario families and businesses. We know only a few things about the deal.

Number one, we know that the energy minister who signed the final deal was on the job for only three days before he put his pen to paper.

Number two, we know that the former energy minister who brokered the deal had to be, and this is how it was printed, "gang-tackled" by Dalton McGuinty's cabinet when he told them what was in the deal.

Number three, we know that the deal will pay Samsung special subsidies above and beyond what other Ontario businesses receive under the FIT program. So this raises a question for taxpayers: Who is making up the difference? Unfortunately, there's only one answer. We know the answer. It is the taxpayers, Ontario families and businesses, who will be paying this subsidy to the Korean conglomerate.

We also know that despite the government's claims, this deal will result in minuscule job creation.

What else do we know? We know it's a 20-year-long commitment that was made without any consultation. It was made completely by secret negotiations, without a single lobbyist registered in Ontario's lobbyist registry.

We know that no one—not industry professionals, not the Auditor General, not Ontario-owned wind energy companies, not even members of this House—had an opportunity to examine this deal, a 20-year deal that is going to have a significant impact on the economy of this province.

As we have said, other than the announcement and a string of ministerial directives, we have absolutely no idea of what is in this deal. The Liberals will not release their long-term energy plan, if they have one, or the impact of the bill's projections. So we have no details. There has been absolutely no transparency and no attempt to show any fairness.

What we need now is for the Samsung subsidy deal to be made public, so that Ontario families and businesses can finally judge for themselves whether or not it provides good value for money. We need to find out what the McGuinty government is hiding, we need to know what the short- and long-term implications are, and finally, we need to know—we absolutely need to know—what the impact of the Samsung subsidy deal is going to be on investment in Ontario and future economic growth.

I hope the Liberal caucus will support the opposition day motion and get to the bottom of this deal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to rise in debate on this motion. In direct response to the motion, I think we need to have a little bit of information on the table, because there's been a fair bit of hysteria here this afternoon.

First off, it's important for folks to understand that Ontario has, in fact, negotiated an agreement with the Korean consortium, which is comprised of Samsung, the Korea Electric Power Corp. and some other partners, and that this will lead to both energy generation investments and manufacturing facilities being constructed here in Ontario. The crucial piece of information that keeps getting lost in the comments across the way is that this means that Samsung and their partners will be bringing \$7 billion to Ontario and investing \$7 billion in Ontario business, not the reverse. Ontario taxpayers aren't paying Samsung \$7 billion; Samsung is bringing \$7 billion to us. The agreement stems from the opportunities created for developers and investors through Ontario's Green Energy

Act and is expected to be among the first of many major investments to result from the leadership position that Ontario has taken on green energy.

Now, the issue of people who would like to see the agreement: Anyone who wishes to see the agreement—and that obviously includes the opposition—is totally free to file a freedom-of-information request, as some folks already have, and people who have filed the freedom-of-information request have gotten the information. The reason we do it this way is because that puts it through a legal process where we can figure out what information is legally required to be retained because it's commercially sensitive and what can be made public. That is the law that the Conservatives worked under when they were the government, that the NDP worked under when they were the government and that we work under when we are the government. The law is the referee of what information is released. That's why we have laws: to sort out the rule. In this case, FIPPA, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, is the referee. The opposition is like everyone else in the province of Ontario: They can refer this question to the referee.

It's worth noting, incidentally, that when the Tories were in government, they in fact removed Hydro One from the freedom-of-information act. It was us who put electrical utilities back under the freedom-of-information act, which is the only reason you can get this information in the first place. Our government will let you have it; their government wouldn't have let you have it.

In my view, the real issue actually has more to do with the Green Energy Act and the whole attitude of our party versus their party toward renewable energy. What has happened is that the Green Energy Act created the concept of a feed-in tariff for renewable energy, it provided the right to connect to the grid for renewable energy, and it provided Ontario-content rules for forms of renewable energy.

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Why did we do that? Because, first of all, we know it's important to protect the environment. I live in a part of Ontario where, when I was growing up, there didn't used to be a lot of smog days. Over the last few decades, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, what we found was that we were having more and more smog days. Do you know why we were having more and more smog days? Obviously, air pollution. But do you know the major source of air pollution in Guelph? The Nanticoke coal-fired power plant, because on hot days—Guelph is north—southerly winds blow all that air pollution up towards my constituents, who get to breathe the dirty air from coal-fired plants.

We're getting rid of those coal-fired plants, and if you're going to get rid of the coal-fired plants, you have to replace them with something. We believe that with the coal-fired plants, a lot of that should be done by replacing them with renewable energy sources.

Secondly, we need a renewable energy supply. When that government was in power, we moved from being a

net exporter of electric power to being a net importer of electric power, because these folks across the way, the Conservative government, refused to invest in any new sources of generation. In fact, they let them go out of production. When it came to our nuclear reactors, their attitude for the most part was, "We're just not going to invest in their repair; we're going to wait for somebody else to come and do it." Nobody else came and did it; nobody saved them. The end result was (a) we had to import a lot of power, and (b) we had to turn more and more to dirty coal.

We have one serious mess to fix in this province which has to do with creating new sources of generation and so that the electricity that we're producing can get from the generator to the user—you and me and everybody else in their homes—better transmission. That's what this is all about: making sure that we have reliable energy, making sure we have clean air to breathe and making sure that we are creating jobs in Ontario.

I want to tell you that, in Guelph, the "creating jobs" is real. We've had two announcements in the last few months about solar energy jobs coming to Guelph. The first is Canadian Solar, which is a Canadian-based company but which was doing all its manufacturing of solar panels in China. When they looked at the Green Energy Act, they said, "For the first time in the history of our company, we are going to repatriate our production, our manufacturing, to Ontario, and we're going to put it in Guelph because we think Guelph is a good business environment for clean energy companies." That's going to produce up to 500 jobs—initially a few hundred, but as that business grows—and that will be up and running within a few months.

The second announcement was just in the last few weeks, when Sustainable Energy Technologies, a Calgary-based company which had actually been considering moving to California, changed its mind and said, "Instead of moving to California, because of the Ontario Green Energy Act, we're moving to Ontario." They looked around, they found a good existing company called Melitron to partner with in Guelph, and that will immediately create 80 jobs in Guelph and up to 300 direct and indirect jobs as their business grows—great jobs that offset the struggles we've had in the auto sector, because Guelph is a manufacturing town. I've got to tell you, there's a lot of excitement.

So our government believes in solar energy. As far as I can figure out, these folks don't.

The Samsung deal is about wind. We believe in wind power; they don't. This is all about not believing in wind power.

We've also brought new hydroelectric projects to Ontario. We believe that where it's possible, we should be using hydroelectric. I would have thought they believed in hydroelectric, but maybe not.

We've got another interesting project going on: the conversion of the old coal plant in Atikokan to using biomass from the forest industry, so that what we will have is a renewable energy source there. Again, we

believe in renewable biomass generation, but I don't think these folks do, because all I hear is, "You shouldn't do this. You shouldn't do this. You shouldn't do this. You shouldn't do that." Every move we make on energy, it's always negative: "No, no, no." I don't know what it is they actually like there. The only thing they seem to like is coal generation. I don't know why they want all that dirty air to breathe, but they sure do like coal generation.

To the motion: They can apply the law that everybody else applies. The freedom-of-information act is there. To the energy issue: We believe in clean, renewable energy, and we're building the economy and the jobs to do just that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Today we, the Progressive Conservative caucus, are calling on the Premier to release critical information regarding his secret Samsung deal. As we all know, on January 21, 2010, Premier McGuinty rushed through this multi-billion-dollar deal with the foreign company Samsung. Not even the new energy minister was kept in the loop about the details of this contract when he arrived on the job two days prior to Premier McGuinty signing this deal. Not a single lobbyist is registered on the Ontario lobbyist registry on behalf of Samsung, KEPCO or any other special interest that received part of this secret deal.

The Korean green energy investment agreement, Samsung's subsidy deal, is a sole-source \$7-billion deal that sprang out of nowhere and took Ontario families and businesses completely by surprise. Under the proposed terms of this secret McGuinty Samsung deal, the government of Ontario will pay a massive multi-billion-dollar subsidy to the Korean multinational conglomerate to establish wind and solar farms in Ontario. Not only is everything about this deal secret, but this multi-billion-dollar deal was not, is not and will not be offered to Ontario-based companies that, by the way, were asked to ready their companies and prepare for the expansion of their capacity for the upcoming tsunami of contracts that was coming from this government. The Association of Power Producers of Ontario, the Canadian Wind Energy Association and the Canadian Solar Industries Association have all condemned the decision to provide preferential access to a multinational corporation with little experience in renewable energy generation in our province.

While the details of this deal are still secret, we are confident that this subsidy will likely pay Samsung anywhere from 475% to 2,000% more than the current wholesale market rate for electricity. This is absurd: a multi-billion-dollar cost that will ultimately be passed on to Ontarians in the form of higher energy rates. This government avoided telling Ontario families and businesses that they will be forced to pay some \$437 million in subsidies above and beyond the already generous multi-billion-dollar subsidy under the Green Energy Act. This works out to be, folks, \$303,000 of subsidy per

permanent new job. Wow. This is an unaffordable, unrealistic plan and just simply a bad deal for Ontarians.
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When the minister was questioned about the job creation, he confirmed that there are not any requirements for Samsung to actually create any new jobs, yet the Premier promises that this deal will create 16,000 new jobs, a very questionable commitment, considering the Liberal Green Energy Act is modelled on Spain's green energy policy, where jobs were actually lost. A study calculates that since the year 2000, Spain spent 571,000 euros to create each green job, including subsidies of more than one million euros per wind energy job. According to a March 2009 university study on the impact of Spain's green energy policy, for every job created, 2.2 jobs were lost to Spain's economy. I would love to see the math as to where the Premier is going to create 16,000 jobs.

The price of a comprehensive electricity rate in Spain, which is paid by the end consumer, would have to be increased 31% to be able to repay this historic debt.

Although the McGuinty government's Samsung deal is a secret, it is no secret that this government has a dismal record of mismanagement of Ontario's energy sector: poor-to-no planning, and ad hoc programs gone bad.

This is exactly why this government needs to make the details public. Ontario consumers must not be part of this government's energy experiment any longer. So why do the Premier and his former energy minister favour the foreign-based company? Evidently, the Premier is trying to hide something. He's keeping the details under wraps because we know that if he had nothing to hide, he would be proudly and publicly boasting about what a good deal it was. It is clear to me and Ontarians that there has been political interference that has compromised our economy and the Ontario energy consumer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, imputing of motive, standing order 23(h).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm listening very carefully, and when I hear it, I'll bring it to someone's attention.

Further debate? The member for Quinte West—
Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Northumberland–Quinte West, thank you.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I know it's getting late in the evening. That's okay.

It gives me an opportunity to speak just for a couple of minutes on this resolution today, which frankly I cannot support. I guess I'm somewhat baffled by the opposition's basic business principles. They keep on referring to the province investing \$7 billion. It's the other way around; Samsung and its consortium are investing \$7 billion.

Let me just use a couple of examples. About three or four years ago, Kellogg's built their first plant in, I think, 20 years in North America. They built it in Belleville, in

the riding of Prince Edward–Hastings. They invested some \$100 million—not quite \$100 million, somewhat less, but through programs that the province has, they got incentives for establishing that plant in Belleville.

When Toyota and Honda first moved to Ontario, there were some incentives paid to those companies. They were investing in Ontario. Kellogg's invested in Ontario; Toyota invested in Ontario; Honda invested, and the government, whatever the government of the day was, helped them along, absolutely, because we're in a very, very, competitive market. So when we incent, we create jobs.

They talk about this being a bad investment. I was on municipal council back during the days of the rolling blackouts. What did the opposition or the government of the day do? They installed diesel generators in communities without those communities even knowing about it. I know they installed one near Grafton. Hydro One installed diesel generators just outside the municipality, just to avoid a rolling blackout. They didn't consult. They didn't even talk to the local municipalities. They just did it, just in case.

I'm appalled by one of the members, the member from Nepean–Carleton, saying that some of the Liberal members were opposed to this. If she really believes that, then she should name names, because I know I didn't oppose it. Whenever we invest and create jobs, I'm all for it. If she has something that we don't know, then she should tell us or the opposition should tell us, and I'll be waiting for that.

I will not be supporting this motion. This is strictly a political ploy that they're trying to play. The people of Ontario are not going to buy it. They're looking for jobs. Are there some costs? Yes, there might be some costs. Nobody is denying that. But to do nothing, like they did for eight years when they were in power, is not an option. We're prepared to move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've been looking forward to this opportunity to speak to this motion regarding the secret Samsung deal.

For seven years now, we've been watching this government stumble along, creating energy policy on an ad hoc basis. You create the OPA, grow it to a bloated bureaucracy, and then completely remove any planning authority that it has. The same goes for your treatment of the OEB and the weekly directives that the Ministry of Energy sends them.

If you're wondering why in the world this government would have these agencies with their own mandates if they were just going to be overruled by the minister's constant interference, you're not alone. The answer is that this style of governing by directive is a consequence of governing without a plan. They don't have a 20-year plan; they don't have a five-year plan; they don't even have a one-month plan.

That leads us to the debate we're having today.

The Samsung deal was perfectly in keeping with this government's and its ministries' completely irresponsible handling of Ontario's energy system. The government surprised the public, the entire energy sector and even their own cabinet by signing this secret deal with Samsung. I think it would be helpful at this time to quickly go back and look at the timetable of the Samsung deal.

On June 25, 2009, George Smitherman was awarded the World Wind Energy Award, 2009, on Jeju Island, Korea. Months later, news of an impending deal was first reported by energy analyst Tom Adams in his blog on September 24. The minister had issued a directive to the OPA that day, instructing them to create the FIT program, the feed-in tariff program, and to hold transmission capacity to accommodate new developments. Once the story was out, the government quickly slapped together a press release, which provided no details of the deal except to say that negotiations had been ongoing for months, and went on to state, "Both parties are committed to a more formal public presentation once a framework agreement has been completed." However, here we are, a year later; a framework agreement was signed over 10 months ago and this government still refuses to provide any real details of what it has committed Ontarians to.

The next day, September 27, 2009, it was reported in the Toronto Star. That article noted Samsung's complete lack of experience in developing renewables and quoted then-Minister of Energy George Smitherman as saying that Samsung would be getting the same rate for generating energy as other developers. We now know that that's not the case; that Samsung is getting a higher FIT rate than any other developer.

That brings us to September 30, 2009, when the Minister of Energy issued another directive to the OPA, instructing them to hold in reserve 500 megawatts of transmission capacity in the highly-sought-after south-western Ontario region for Samsung. You're aware of that region, Speaker; you come from there.

For eight months, the FIT program was in place, and developers—the other developers—were applying to the program according to the published rules. Planning for projects was done in good faith and on the understanding that transmission capacity would be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Other companies have closed their doors as a result of this deal and the preferential treatment that was given Samsung. I'll quote from David Butters, the president of APPRO, the Association of Power Producers of Ontario, who said, "The government has created a crisis for Ontario's existing renewable energy sector. Everyone except Samsung is left wondering how they fit into Ontario's energy future."

The government then stayed completely silent until it was reported by the Toronto Star in October 2009 that members of Dalton McGuinty's cabinet "gang-tackled" former Minister of Energy George Smitherman—he was still the minister then—when they learned of the deal.

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The Star also reported that ministers feared that the deal would "mean billions of dollars in subsidies to Sam-

sung.” Well, they were right about that. You ministers who said that, you were right.

What happens next explains why an anonymous cabinet minister said that “morale” over there “is lower than a gutter snake ... on a back country road.” By that time, George Smitherman was already organizing a Christmas skate for this year at Nathan Phillips Square as the mayor. How did that work out for him?

He was replaced as Minister of Energy by the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, who I’ve had the pleasure of working with many times and I know him to be a man of integrity. But after all the talk of Smitherman’s gang-tackling and cabinet objections, suddenly the member for Scarborough—Agincourt was replaced by the current minister just three days before signing the framework agreement with the Korean consortium. He must have really understood it at that point.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. If I had to wager a guess, I’d say that the change was to bring in a new minister who wasn’t so independently minded and would just do as he was told. This is the context in which we debate the motion today. We have reports of serious objections in the McGuinty cabinet about this deal, we have industry stakeholders outraged at being thrown under the bus, and we have international investors wary of your government’s choosing winners and losers.

As we have said, other than the announcement and a string of ministerial directives, we have no idea what was in their deal. To make matters worse, the Liberals will not release their long-term energy plan or the bill impact projections.

Despite all the government’s claims about job creation, the Samsung deal put all shovel-ready projects on hold and includes no job guarantees. Despite commitments from the former minister that Samsung would be paid the same FIT rate as other developers, we know that’s not the case.

I’d like to touch on another issue, and that’s the issue of cost. The government tries to present the secret Samsung deal as being private sector investment in Ontario. It’s nothing of the sort. Let’s look at the cost to the taxpayer in this deal. First of all, there’s the \$437-million “economic adder,” the details of which are erased from the FOI. Then there’s the cost of 2,500 megawatts of wind and solar power paid at exorbitant rates for 20 years. We don’t know what this will cost but we know it will be in the billions. Finally, there’s the cost of transmission. The OPA has received applications for 11,500 megawatts, counting the Samsung deal, that require connection to the grid. However, according to the OEB, at the present time Ontario can only accommodate 4,000 megawatts. That leaves over 7,000 megawatts that have no place to go.

This issue was discussed in an OEB discussion paper dated April 19, 2010. That paper concludes that billions of dollars additional will have to be invested in transmission.

As I’ve mentioned already in my comments, the government has refused to release in a timely manner, as

required by legislation, a long-term energy plan. I would suggest that this deal is a substantial reason why. We don’t know what the cost is. The party opposite does, but they refuse to say.

The motion we’re voting on this evening is one of great public interest. At a time when energy bills are skyrocketing and salaries aren’t seeing similar increases, it is particularly important to know where things are headed.

I ask the members to do the right thing. Stop toeing the party line and act in the best interests of your constituents. We will obviously be voting in favour of this motion. I ask the members on the other side of the House to do the right thing.

There have been a number things said today on this deal. We don’t know the details. We have scads of ministers’ directives to the OEB, to the OPA. We have an FOI request for the contract, which is filled with mostly blank pages.

The people of this province who pay the energy bills, who are struggling on a day-to-day basis just to get by, the 86% of them, according to the Toronto Star, who say they’re having a tougher time now than they were two years ago, have a right to know what the impact to them is going to be over the next 20 to 40 years by the terms of this deal. If Premier McGuinty cares at all about the people in this province who pay the bills, then he will stand up and do the right thing and release the terms of this deal so that everyone has the right to judge the deal on its merits, just as they should have the right to judge this government or any other government on its merits. They’ll have that chance in October 2011.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: It’s my pleasure to stand and speak to this motion today. The key point that has been discussed today is that Samsung, a foreign company, is attracted to investing in Ontario because of the climate we have created here. Ontario is open for business. Samsung saw that opportunity and has decided to invest \$7 billion in Ontario.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: How much?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Seven billion dollars. They believe that Ontario has the workforce that can do this. They believe Ontario has the abilities, and the climate has been created for that type of investment.

Much has been said today about releasing the information in the contract. The information is there. All they have to do is file a freedom-of-information request. They’re very experienced at doing that, as we know, and I look forward to hearing the results when they do file that.

But, as we know when dealing with government contracts, it’s a necessary step to file a freedom-of-information request so that legal counsel, on behalf of the government, can look into the details and make sure it can be done. I’m sure the members of the opposition will be able to read it very thoroughly and bring forward lots of information.

It's also important to remind members of the opposition that when they were in power, they removed Hydro One from the freedom-of-information laws and would have hidden such details. We have stepped forward by asking the Auditor General on numerous occasions to look into everything. This is what our government is about. It's about openness and accountability.

What exactly is the impact of the Green Energy Act or of deals like Samsung? It's about jobs. It's about creating jobs. My colleague from Ottawa Centre earlier read a detailed list where he talked about jobs that are available: 375 jobs here, 800 there. The total he spoke about when he was going through that was 9,670 jobs that have been created in Ontario.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: How many?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Nine thousand, six hundred and seventy jobs. That's huge.

My colleague from Hamilton—Stoney Creek, there are a lot of steel plants, and hopefully Hamilton steel plants will be used to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Sorry. I've got it right now.

Do you know what? Hopefully, jobs will be created that will use Ontario steel made in Hamilton. I think it's very important, because this is going to kick-start our renewable energy manufacturing.

I've heard on CBC different mayors being interviewed, talking about how they want these companies to come to their communities. I agree. In fact, earlier this summer, working with my federal Conservative counterpart Mr. Barry Devolin, who is the rep in my area, Barry arranged for him and me to go to Ottawa to meet with the president of Samsung so we could try to convince them to locate one of their manufacturing plants in our area. We met with the president and CEO of Samsung Electronics Canada, Mr. Benjamin Lee. We had a great meeting. It was very productive. We've agreed to meet again in the future to discuss this further.

My community is just one of many in this province that is looking for jobs. If we could bring a plant to my community, just as to any of the other communities in this province, it would be a great gain for this province. Among the things that have been brought up today, I would like to thank my federal Conservative counterpart for seeing the vision of this bill.

Once again, I'd like to remind you that we're talking about \$9 billion of foreign investment in this province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thought it was seven.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Seven billion. Sorry. It's growing. I appreciate the correction.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You guys exaggerate everything.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's nice that members opposite are paying so much attention and suddenly understand math in the last hour. I very much appreciate that.

One of the things that we talked about earlier is what would happen in this province if we cut off foreign

investment, if we were to take this whole idea that we don't need foreign investment. Would Ford be here? Would a Conservative government say to General Motors, "We're not interested"? What would that do to Oshawa? Would they say to Toyota, "We don't want your foreign investment"? Would they say to Chrysler, "We don't want your foreign investment"? Would they say to Honda, "We don't want your foreign investment"? We have a company that's investing \$7 billion in our province because they believe in our province. They understand that Ontario is open for business. We've got Ubisoft. We've got Starz Animation. We've got the Terrace Bay Pulp mill, which we did in partnership with other members.

Our government has created an atmosphere where foreign companies are saying, "Ontario is the place to invest." Why is Canada leading the world in the economic recovery? And why is Ontario leading Canada in that recovery? It's because of the policies that have been put in place by our government. I am happy to stir the ire—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just call on the member to start actually representing the facts as they do present themselves in the truth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That is not a point of order.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 3.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hillier, Randy

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Carroll, Aileen
Delaney, Bob
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David

Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 31.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. So if you depart, depart quietly, please.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Labour. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to five minutes to debate the matter.

Mr. Paul Miller: Let me first clarify for the House that my question this morning of the Minister of Labour was in no way a negative comment on the WSIB funding review panellists. It was actually quite simple. In addition to these panellists, there should be an actual injured worker on the panel.

The funding review panel is looking into issues that affect each and every injured worker in this province, injured workers who are quite clear that their voice should be heard as a member of that panel in the person of an injured worker who has been through the WSIB system. I venture to say that none of the current panel members have been through the system. The experience of someone like that is essential to the full review of any aspect of the WSIB. I can't understand why it isn't part of the protocol for naming panellists in every ministry that an actual affected party must be included in the dialogue.

Having had the pleasure of Dr. Arthurs's expertise through his Expert Commission on Pensions, I believe that he will give injured workers full access to the panel to make deputations, but that's not the issue here. Again, the issue is that an actual injured worker should be appointed as a full member of the WSIB funding review panel. Wasn't our system set up to protect employers from being sued in workplace injuries? In exchange for this workers' compensation system, injured workers lost a significant right to sue their negligent employer. Now, when we're going to review the sad state of the WSIB funding, there's no actual injured worker, someone living on their now-reduced income, on this funding review panel. How can this major interested party be put on the sidelines?

I have said so many times before in this House that the government shows significant disrespect for its opposition. I'm sick and tired of McGuinty's ministers avoiding answering the actual question asked—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'd just remind the member that with the name usage it's either Premier McGuinty or the McGuinty government, but not just McGuinty.

Mr. Paul Miller: —the McGuinty government interpreting the content of the questions to suit their own agenda. Almost without fail, when asked reasonable questions often representing the wishes, views and opinions of Ontarians who have a specific and important issue to raise, the government refuses to dignify their concerns with a proper answer. Repeatedly, the government mocks the question, and rather than give the question the respect it deserves, they stoop to ridicule. They must realize that this ridicule is actually aimed at the Ontarians for whom we're asking the question. The McGuinty Liberals go into the attack mode, making allegations against the opposition that really have no bearing on the question at hand. They attack the record of the opposition on other issues, ignoring the question asked for the people of Ontario.

One of the McGuinty Liberals' more recent tacks is to yell, applaud and generally act poorly in an effort to drown out the legitimate question being asked. It seems to be their marching orders of the day and month. It's a bad display, a disgraceful performance, particularly as these are the ministers, the cabinet, who should be showing proper decorum in the Legislature. Every time that this minister is asked a question about the WSIB, he goes into a rant about their record, the Liberals' record on other issues, but he seems completely unable to actually answer the question that has been asked.

I'm putting the government on notice today that every time I ask a question that I believe is not properly answered, I'm going to consider asking for a late show. The minister has an opportunity right now to correct the shameful display from this morning's question period. He can right now agree to ensure that an actual injured worker will be included on the WSIB funding review panel.

Year after year in this House I've watched and I've asked questions, especially labour questions, to the minister, and I don't get answers. He stands up and he talks about his safety record and what they're doing and everything but what I ask. I think it's time that the people of Ontario were given the honour of hearing an answer that was actually applicable to the question. It doesn't happen. It probably won't happen. It's a sad state of affairs. Many times people in this House ask questions and don't get an answer, but I guess there are going to be a lot more late shows this year, because we certainly are not getting answers and I think the people of Ontario deserve it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Since 2003, this government has done more for injured workers than any other government, and we will continue to be committed to treating injured workers with fairness, dignity and respect. That's why we have increased injured workers'

benefits four times since 2007, and on January 1, 2011, and January 1, 2012, we will increase those benefits again by 0.5% in each of those years. This will result in a total cumulative increase of over 9% since mid-2007.

As the member stated in question period today, the WSIB has announced that it is conducting a comprehensive funding review to ensure the board's long-term financial stability.

And to answer the member's question, each one of the members on the review panel is representing injured workers. That is what this whole consultation process has been about: to ensure that the WSIB is on firm financial footing for a sustainable system of compensation.

This year-long funding review will gather expert advice and input from workers, including injured workers, labour and employers on a range of public policy issues related to the WSIB's financial future. Meetings have already been scheduled for Professor Arthurs to meet with injured workers to discuss the review and the important role that injured workers and their advocates will play throughout the process. As a matter of fact, Mr. Arthurs is not only working himself but he has other people that are on his consultation panel.

Our government has asked that the review include options for a new benefit indexation formula to replace the modified Friedland formula to support fairness for injured workers. I can appreciate the member's concern about this issue, but I'm shocked that the party that introduced the Friedland formula, otherwise known as the F-word, is asking this government about supporting injured workers. We're making improvements to a program because we know that it's the right thing to do.

As I mentioned, Professor Arthurs and his advisory committee have already started meeting with stakeholders to provide expert advice as the funding review

proceeds. Mr. Arthurs is committed to ensuring that the needs and future well-being of injured workers is weighed carefully during the review.

The committee members who are representing not only injured workers but employers and labour groups are: (1) Buzz Hargrove, former national president of the Canadian Auto Workers; (2) John Tory, former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario; (3) Maureen Farrow, external adviser on the WSIB board of directors' investment committee; and (4) John O'Grady, chair of the Institute for Work and Health.

As the funding review continues and Professor Arthurs gathers material and submissions from people and organizations across Ontario, he may consult with committee members for context, background and technical advice to ensure clarity and a balanced approach to his work as the funding review chair.

The WSIB has a very important plan. Last spring, when talking about a fully funded system in the standing committee, Mr. Miller told Mr. David Marshall, president of the WSIB, "I'm counting on you." He said, "I think that contingency funds are important for the bad times."

This is about working together, and our government will continue to support the WSIB's effort to create a stable and sustainable system of compensation for injured workers in Ontario.

Information on the timing and scope of the review is available on the WSIB website. It is expected to conclude in November 2011. I look forward to the results of this funding review.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House is adjourned until Thursday, October 28, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1814.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
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Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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Second Session, 39th Parliament

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 28 October 2010

Jeudi 28 octobre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 October 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 octobre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Jeff, quorum. The minute I walk out and Ted walks out there's no quorum. Get some people in here.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I will carry on.

I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, and to voice my support for this act.

I'd like to begin by telling you a little bit about the legislation and what it will accomplish. The proposed legislation, if it's passed, will do the following things: First of all, and what has perhaps been discussed most prominently in the media, it will create a ban on lobbyists that would prohibit many of the broader public sector organizations from using public funds to hire lobbyists. I need to emphasize the track here. What we're saying is that organizations that receive funding primarily from the provincial government should not be using those taxpayer dollars to pay for lobbyists to lobby the government to get more money. To us, that simply makes no sense and we're going to put a ban on that practice.

That ban will apply to 259 classified agencies, which would include things like the LCBO, Cancer Care On-

tario, all the various hydro entities and the one that has come to light as a result of the auditor's report: large broader public sector transfer agencies like hospitals. It will also include transfer agencies like school boards, community care access centres and universities. In fact, any publicly funded organization that gets more than \$10 million in funding from the provincial government will be included in this ban on taking taxpayer dollars and using them to hire lobbyists to get more taxpayer dollars. That's the first thing the act will do.

It will also provide the government with the authority to make procurement directives that larger broader public sector entities will have to follow. This would apply to things like hospitals and school boards, and the procurement rules will be the same as the guidelines the ministries themselves are now following. This comes as a result of trying to work with some of these sectors—I'll get to this later—with voluntary guidelines that align with the government's own internal guidelines. As the auditor has pointed out, that hasn't been successful, so now we're saying that we're going to legislate these guidelines.

There will be expense claim rules, because one of the things the auditor found was some egregious abuse of public dollars for expenses in some of these transfer agencies like hospitals. We will be putting an end to that. Again, this will give us the legislative authority to give directives to hospitals and school boards about what expense guidelines need to look like. We'll also have rules related to transparency, that those expenses will actually have to be posted in some cases.

The posting would require LHINs and hospitals to comply with the directives around posting of expense claim information for designated individuals such as CEOs, board members and senior managers, and those would need to go on their public websites. Just as we currently have the ruling internally about needing to post expense claims for deputy ministers, other senior people around here, ministers and their staff, parliamentary assistants and opposition party leaders—all of those—we, the McGuinty government, will be extending that requirement in law so that others will be required to do that as well.

We will also be providing for increased oversight of hospitals and LHINs. The proposed legislation would authorize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to put in place new accountability measures specifically for hospitals and LHINs. That would require public posting of expense claim information, but in addition to that, it would require the reporting of the use of consultants.

There are lots of legitimate uses of consultants, but what the public needs to know is when a hospital or LHIN is going beyond its own staffing and hiring a consultant. That would now be publicly reported automatically.

0910

There would be what is known in law as an attestation, essentially a swearing—the member for Welland will correct me if that is wrong and an attestation is not really a swearing; I think that's what it means—about each organization's compliance with the requirements. So the CEO is going to have to swear that they have complied, and the ministry will be able to go in and directly audit the operations of LHINs and hospitals.

There are a number of attestations that will need to be made: the reporting on the use of consultants, the prohibition on engaging lobbyists, the compliance with expense claims and the compliance with the procurement directives. In fact, if it turns out that somebody is either not doing the required attestations or the attestations turn out not to be accurate, CEOs could actually have their pay docked.

This goes beyond trying to work with some of these agencies in a more voluntary policy mode, and says that we've done the policy thing and now we're going to actually put this in legislation, because compliance with the policy directives has clearly been inadequate.

As people in this chamber will certainly be aware, the report by the Auditor General, which he did at the request of the public accounts committee, of which I am a member—there was unanimous agreement among the members of all three parties in requesting this special audit by the auditor. He audited 16 hospitals. He found that of those 16 hospitals, eight were using lobbyists inappropriately, which is why we are ending that practice now, and eight others had problems not necessarily with the inappropriate use of consultants but with respect to inappropriate procurement of consultants that would be acceptable to use.

It happens that one of the hospitals that were audited was Guelph General Hospital, my hospital. I'd like to give you a little bit of information about what they found there. My hospital was not one of the hospitals that was hiring lobbyists. They actually took the approach that they wanted to be quite public with the people of Guelph in letting the people of Guelph know what the auditor had identified and what they, as an individual hospital, were going to do to correct that.

In fact, they posted a lot of information on their website. They started by explaining the background of the Auditor General's report, and went on to say—I'm quoting from their website:

"We welcomed the audit as an opportunity to help us identify strengths and opportunities to improve," said Richard Ernst, President and CEO. 'All hospitals in the report, including us, had gaps in how well they managed the use [of] consultants.'"

The website goes on to say:

"In particular, GGH needed to improve its processes with regards to sole sourcing (the awarding of contracts

without having a competitive bidding process) and follow-on agreements (extending existing contracts without a full review beforehand).

"More recently, the hospital has implemented a new, well-documented process for how it buys things, including consulting services. Among other things, its process requires directors to document and justify their needs prior to obtaining senior management approval. In addition, all consulting engagements will have contracts with clear deliverables, ceiling prices, payment schedules, and performance management processes identified."

Those were all things that the Auditor General specifically identified as weaknesses in hospital procurement practices in general and in GGH's practices in particular. They have moved to correct those problems that the Auditor General identified. The website goes on to say:

"The Auditor General report doesn't question the need to use consultants, just the manner in which they are managed," Ernst said. 'Health care is very complex and consultants provide an important service to hospitals as we don't always have the expertise on staff.'

"For example, some of the recent ways GGH has invested in the knowledge and experience of consultants include:

- targeted clinical reviews of departments to ensure quality of care and efficiency"—so they brought in an external reviewer to look how they can improve their practice;

- implementation of IT projects, which improve efficiency, patient safety and quality of care"—and many organizations, not just hospitals, don't have the IT expertise on staff and need to hire someone in to do specific IT projects, information technology, computerization, so that's quite a normal use of consulting in the broader public sector;

- training and education expertise"—and I know one that they specify, for example, was they brought in an external reviewer to look at their practices in the emergency room. That external reviewer identified a number of areas where they could improve practice and expedite service for patients who go to Guelph General Hospital. They then engaged a consultant who had expertise in training to work through the implementation and training of that with all the emergency room staff, and it actually has resulted in a significant reorganization of the emergency room but also an improvement in the flow-through times at Guelph General Hospital. That was a question of procurement badly done. The result of the exercise had a positive impact on patient care in Guelph.

- physician and executive recruitment"—I know they've had to replace a few doctors who are on staff and they had to replace their CFO, so they brought in what would be called a headhunter to help with that; and

- environmental assessment"—issues where they've been required to do an environmental assessment for one reason or another. Again, that's not expertise that they would have on staff. They need to bring somebody in. Nobody is arguing that. But what they also need to do, and what we are putting in this law, is making sure that

when they do that, that they do it effectively, that they do it according to the rules, that it's competitive, that it's open, and there is a limit on what the consultant can bill.

Then the website goes on to say:

"The report"—this is the AG's report—"provides guidelines about best practices engaging consultants. GGH has already made improvements to its policies and procedures in this area and now meets or exceeds the guidelines.

"In addition, the report recommends that hospital boards play a more active role in the oversight of the awarding of large contracts.

"To date, our board of commissioners has not expressed any concerns about management decisions to engage consultants," said the board chair, Peter Ferraro. "However, we will put processes in place to ensure our new policies and procedures are being followed and the board is more involved in the oversight of consulting engagements.

"Our board believes GGH is a very well managed organization. Through the fiscal challenges of the past year, we've managed to balance our budget and continue to provide the range of services our community requires. In fact, in the past two years, we've added a regional bariatric program and have been designated regional provider of elective vascular services." Then it goes on with a few more comments.

Obviously, once it was known that Guelph General Hospital was one of the audited hospitals, that created local media interest and the Guelph Mercury picked up on that story and reported much of the information that I've just given you here. They did point out that, "Guelph General spends about \$700,000 a year"—slightly more than one half of 1%—"of its \$120-million operating budget on consultants." That's probably not a terribly surprising fee. Mr. Ferraro, who is mentioned earlier as the chair of the board of commissioners of the hospital: "Ferraro said Guelph General doesn't use consultants for lobbying, noting that the hospital speaks directly on issues with Queen's Park"—the Ministry of Health—"or Guelph Liberal MPP Liz Sandals."

I can certainly attest to that. I get regular updates from the CEO and the chair of the board. Certainly, when there's an issue where they think they need some help with the Ministry of Health, I'm in there; I get a visit from my friends at Guelph General Hospital. In fact, I often get a visit from my friend at Groves hospital, which is up in Fergus, in Mr. Arnott's riding. They were in to see me just last week, too, with an issue that they're looking at. It's not at all unusual, in my neck of the woods, to be dealing with all the different public sector organizations, none of which seem to think it is necessary to hire lobbyists to talk to the government. They do, in fact, come and talk to the local MPP.

0920

With the few minutes that I have left, I'd just like to give a bit of the background to this because I think it's important with hospitals to understand the track this has taken. When we came in to government in 2003, the

Auditor General was not allowed to go into these broader public sector organizations. We changed the law so the auditor could actually look. Because we said, "Auditor, go take a look," guess what? The auditor found things.

I know, because I'm on public accounts, that the first thing the auditor did was actually go into most of the major broader public sector organizations and look specifically, the first time through, at their procurement policies. He essentially said that none of these people have the rigour of the government's own procurement policy.

I'll quote the auditor in his report here. The government actually responded to that first round, and this is in the auditor's description of what happened: "Recognizing the inconsistencies in procurement policies existing in the broader public service, the treasury board of cabinet directed in March 2008 that a supply chain guideline be prepared and, as of April 1, 2009, be incorporated into the ministry's funding agreements with organizations receiving more than \$10 million per fiscal year. Two key documents were prepared: the supply chain code of ethics setting out overarching principles of conduct for organizations, their suppliers, advisers, and other stakeholders for acceptable behaviours and standards; and procurement policies and procedures governing how organizations are to conduct their sourcing, contracting, and purchasing." He goes on to describe that in a bit more detail. "Treasury board announced that the code and procurement policy were to be implemented by April 1, 2010."

But I want to note that, at this time, there was no legislative authority to put this in law, so what we did, as treasury board, was say, "Here are the guidelines you are expected to follow."

I now go on to quote the auditor: "The hospitals we visited were all aware of the new requirements and acknowledged that the new supply-chain policies were an improvement. However, as of April 1, 2010, some hospitals had not yet fully implemented the policies," and then he goes on to describe what they're doing.

The point here is that we have been working on this ever since we came to government. We said to the auditor, "Look." As a result of his first look, we said, "Here are appropriate guidelines." It turns out that isn't strong enough; now we're putting it into law, and there is no question that people will have to follow the law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened carefully and, quite frankly, enthusiastically to the member during her comments on this bill. She was thorough in her analysis of the bill, section by section. I have no hesitation in stating that.

I'm going to be speaking to the bill myself in a few minutes' time, for the modest 20 minutes that's going to be allowed me this morning. While one can speak about the technicalities of the bill, one can also—and I shall—speak about the fact that you can drive a Mack truck through it.

They can't even call them loopholes when it's that big, when it's big enough to drive a Mack—you know what a

Mack truck is, huh? When I worked out in northern BC in the copper mines as a law student, I was the bottom rung of the food chain there; I was a greaser. A Mack truck is a truck where the tires are taller than you are. To change the oil, you've got to walk under it and reach up to change the oil in a crankcase on a Mack truck. So you could drive a Mack truck through the loopholes here.

This isn't going to end lobbying and this isn't going to end high-priced consultants all being paid for on the taxpayer dime. What this bill is really about is the sordid, unseemly relationship between politically connected lobbyists, publicly funded organizations and, more significantly, this Liberal government. To a large extent, the lobby industry is all about fundraising for political parties in power. It's all about selling access to Premiers and ministers of the crown at 300 bucks a pop, 400 bucks a pop, 500 bucks a pop, whatever the market will bear.

Mark my words: If the Premier is shaking your hands at one of these well-heeled, highly funded access events, he's looking over your shoulder to see who the next person is that he's got to shake hands with. The handler for the Premier or a particular cabinet minister might deem you appropriate for a business card exchange—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Guelph spent some time this morning highlighting the contents of Bill 122. Certainly, I think we all agree here in the House that local MPPs, when they do their job of representing their communities—I know in my particular case, Peterborough Regional Health Centre never hired a lobbyist to talk to the provincial government. I can also say that Trent University and Fleming College in my riding have never used lobbyists to approach the provincial government, having a long-standing relationship with those three organizations. We usually meet on a monthly basis to find out what is going on and how I can assist them in a whole variety of projects that they are moving forward.

I think we also need to separate the role of lobbyists from consultants. If you look at any organization, public sector or private sector, across the province of Ontario, from time to time they do employ engineering consultants. As a former municipal politician, for some large projects beyond the scope of staff within the organization, consultants were brought in. Indeed sometimes, when there was a CEO of a municipality to be hired, often there was a personnel consulting group brought in to scan Ontario and throughout other areas of Canada to get an individual who might be leading an organization that has a substantive budget.

I noted in a National Post article written by John Ivison back in October—the title was “NDP Happy to Dance with ‘High-Priced, Well-Connected Insiders,’” at \$1,000 a ticket on November 27.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I listened with interest to the member from Guelph. Bill 122 really should be named an act to divert attention from the real issues of how

government has been done under the Liberal government. It's virtually impossible for a member of this Legislature—albeit the Minister of Health, in her opening remarks relating to this bill, said that MPPs should be the real lobbyists and are empowered to do that. The fact of the matter is, we all know in this place that that is not the case.

Any member of this Legislature who has written letters to a minister knows full well that, with the exception of at least one minister whom I'm looking at right now, it takes us literally follow-up after follow-up after follow-up call to get a response. And then when we do, we get a template response.

The question really is, will this bill do anything to make government more effective? I suggest no, because it's simply diverting the attention of the public, once again, to be seen to be doing something. At the end of the day, it is doing nothing and will do nothing.

0930

What should be done? MPPs in this place should in fact be empowered to do the lobbying on behalf of their constituents, on behalf of their hospitals, on behalf of the services that are missing in the community. MPPs should be given the respect that they're due by the ministers of the crown to respond to their questions, not just with another question or with another diversion, but to indicate that their appeals are being taken seriously and that action will be taken by the minister. Then we don't need any outside lobbyists.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Guelph and her comments on Bill 122. The bill is in response to the Auditor General's report Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations. It is important to note that this government has cut the cost of consultants from \$656 million in 2001-02 to less than half—\$304 million—in 2009-10. Information technology consultants like in projects like eHealth are probably the most frequent consultants used. It's difficult for hospitals, LHINs and the government to properly define the scope and estimate the time required, the cost and the deliverables for these complex IT projects. There is a history of overrun in dollars, time and meeting the deliverables.

Our government has addressed this by bringing in IT Source. IT Source is a modern, mobile workforce of OPS staff that can be deployed to IT projects across government. IT Source has a current complement of 167 personnel. In the public accounts committee, we discussed the importance of government having that capacity. That has moved ahead, and 167 personnel will grow to 275 full-time equivalents this year, replacing the consultants who previously did this work. Ministries will be able to obtain in-house the expertise in selecting, modifying and creating the IT systems they need. In-house expertise will avoid the complex problems that have developed with large IT developments in federal, provincial and municipal governments. We have been moving ahead. We've already got 167 personnel in place to make sure these do not occur. I just compliment our government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Guelph has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members from Welland, Peterborough, Newmarket–Aurora and Ottawa–Orléans for their remarks.

To the member from Welland: Yes, I do know what a Mack truck is. I actually, when I was in high school, had quite a close friend whose father was a senior executive at Mack trucks. So I am familiar with Mack trucks. You wanted to know; you got the answer.

I do want to remark on a couple of remarks. This business about politically connected Liberal consultants is absolute garbage. I went through that whole list of consultants that my local hospital has hired. I don't have a clue who any of them are. I don't know whether some of them might be Liberals or Conservatives; some of them might even be NDP, for all I know. I doubt the hospital even knows what their political connections are. They hired them because they had expertise in the area that I mentioned when I went through the list.

In terms of some of the lobbyists and this whole business of access to government, when we actually go back and check the files, it turns out that in fact, many of these lobbyists have long-standing contracts which began prior to 2003 when it was actually a Conservative government. So I suspect that many of those lobbyists are actually Conservative connections, if they have any connections.

The other thing I want to say is on this "MPPs need to be empowered." My experience is that the public sector organizations in my riding come to me. They don't have lobbyists. So my experience is that I am empowered to deal with the needs of my constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector. I want to congratulate my colleague our critic for revenue and government accountability for the excellent job she has done in already stating some of the points that we wish to get on the record.

This was introduced on October 20 of this year. It basically is proposing that there would be the bringing in of new rules and higher accountability standards for hospitals, local health integration networks, or LHINs, and the broader public sector, BPS, around the use of lobbyists, consultants and expenses. The legislation, supposedly, if passed, would expand the freedom-of-information legislation to cover hospitals effective January 1, 2012—I do find that very interesting because there's no reason this couldn't have become effective in 2011, before the election—and it also would require hospitals and LHINs to post expenses of senior executives online and require hospitals and LHINs to report annually on their use of consultants. And, of course, organizations funded by the government would no longer be able to use public funds to hire lobbyists.

I would say that this piece of legislation was introduced for a couple of reasons, and I don't think they bear

the same reasoning as the government pretends. I believe the government got caught. They got caught, first, on the eHealth fiasco, where we found out that \$1 billion had been wasted, much of it on consultants who had been hired by this government and who had very strong affiliations to the government and party of the day.

I believe this bill is also in response to eHealth 2.0. Had the Liberals voted for the bill that we introduced on May 6, 2010—Bill 39, the Truth in Government Act—I think many of the problems that have been brought up now by the Auditor General would have already been on the way to being addressed, but the government chose not to.

I also agree with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora. I think that this bill is another attempt to divert attention away from an issue—an issue where MPPs do not, if you are in opposition, have the ear of many of the cabinet ministers. Despite the fact that the Minister of Health was quoted as saying, "No CEO needs a lobbyist to get in contact with me or my office.... Our MPPs are more than willing to act as lobbyists. I urge the hospital to make use of the best lobbyists they have and that's their MPPs," I would say to you, that is definitely not the case. In fact, my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills discovered that when he tried—and he has been trying now for many, many years—to lobby on behalf of his hospitals in Fergus and in Georgetown. Regrettably, his pleas for assistance, his pleas for some information as to where these hospitals might stand in the 10-year plan or where they might stand in the queue appear to have, up until now, fallen on unresponsive ears. In other words, the ministers of the day—and there has been more than one—have simply not responded.

I know myself, oftentimes when you have an issue and you approach some ministers, people are not responsive. I heard the member from Guelph, who spoke just before me, say that she has great success. Well, maybe she has great success because she is a member of the governing party. But I would say to you, for most MPPs in opposition, we get little in the way of attention or respect. I would have to qualify that: I do believe there are certain ministers and people who were ministers and no longer are today in this government who actually are very responsive. There is at least one in the House today that I think all of my colleagues would agree has been most responsive to the concerns, and that's how it should be.

0940

But for the Minister of Health to say that the MPPs should be the lobbyists, I can assure her that my colleague certainly has found his repeated requests, not even getting the approval, but getting information as to where his hospitals stand in the queue—he just hasn't been able to obtain the information.

I know that other colleagues here—for example, we had an issue with Cambridge hospital. I would find out information about Cambridge—despite the fact that my colleague from Cambridge and I were actually very interested in what was going on there because it was part of the whole health services restructuring picture in the

Waterloo region, we wouldn't get any information from the LHINs until the government members had all of the information. We're lucky to get a phone call for an announcement that's going to be made at 9 o'clock in the morning. We might get an email the night before at 6 o'clock. They always want to make sure that we're not there, basically. They don't have a lot of interest in us even being present at announcements.

That's something that certainly concerns me, that the LHINs have become so politicized. These LHINs were supposedly set up in order to obtain input from our communities. They were supposed to be non-partisan. I can tell you that over the years, we in opposition are the last people that anybody wants to listen to and get advice from, and we certainly don't get any information as to what it is they're doing until the very last minute. We're often not even acknowledged, yet the government members have had the information for a long time. If they contact us, they won't tell us what it is they're announcing.

How silly. Surely, as a representative in my community, I have the right to know what is going to happen in my community and the right to information. My regional chair has it, my mayors have it, but I'm not given it. I can't believe it. That's what's happened with some of the LHINs throughout the province of Ontario. There's certainly not a body that is non-partisan or involving all of the members of provincial Parliament, who have been, by the way, duly elected by the people in their riding to represent them. So if you wonder why people are critical of the LHINs, it's because they have developed a bureaucracy and certainly are not responsive to the people that we represent.

This bill is basically, I think, an attempt to divert attention away from that issue, where MPPs no longer are the people who actually have any influence with the ministers. I think if you take a look at an article here in the *Toronto Star*, they have said that "the access and influence of MPPs has steadily diminished and power has drifted into corner offices and the hands of a few unelected advisers." So it's not just MPPs who feel they're not being listened to in opposition. The media also recognize that there is a problem and that that problem needs to be addressed.

If we take a look at the report that came out in October, the Special Report on Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations, as I say, this bill is in part also a response to that report.

I was really disappointed to see the Minister of Health earlier this week, on October 26, delightfully taking the opportunity to attempt to divert attention away from the seriousness of the report, a reminder of the fact that there has been a lot of use of lobbyists during the term of this government since 2003, because she attempted to shift the blame.

I would say that the Auditor General, in his report, was referring primarily to the use of lobbyists and consultants since 2003. However, she took quite a bit of delight in saying, on that day, October 26:

"On page 30 he talks about a contract dating from 2002.... Again, the party in power was the Conservatives; the Minister of Health was the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

"It's hard to be humble, but you're not perfect in every way. We all hold responsibility."

Yes, we do hold responsibility, but I would say to the health minister—and I would hope she would rise in this House today at the first opportunity possible and acknowledge that she was wrong. I was not the Minister of Health at any time in 2002. I would hope it was a member of her staff who gave her incorrect information, and I would hope that she would set the record straight.

If I take a look at this report, we hear about a hospital that was awarded at least 15 contracts between 2007 and 2010. As of February 2010, total payments made to the firm amounted to over \$650,000. Then we hear about another hospital engaging an engineering firm, on a single-source basis, to provide consulting at a cost of \$165,000. We hear about another hospital that started engaging a consulting firm in 2002; it was completed in 2009, and approximately \$3.7 million was paid. We hear another one about a hospital that single-sourced a contract; again, there were total payments of \$259,000 since 2007.

If we turn the page, we see that we have an example that has been brought forward by the Auditor General of Ontario that says that a hospital engaged a consultant from February to April 2008, at a cost of \$163,000. We see that another hospital single-sourced an information technology program to a consulting firm in January 2008. We see another one in June 2008 and August 2008—consultant fees. We have another hospital that single-sourced a contract to an engineering firm for \$21,000 in early 2007, and the project was completed in 2009.

The examples are on page 25, page 26 and page 27. The time of most of these lobbyists and consultants it is between 2003 to the current time. Many of them, if I look at page 26—here's one: "In April 2006, a hospital single-sourced the engagement of a consulting firm...." On page 27, we have the period of time a consultant was engaged, from 2007 to 2009; and at another hospital, 2007 to 2009. We have another hospital here: April 2007 to 2008. And we have another single-sourced contract: 2007 to 2009. Those are on pages 26 to 27.

On page 28, we have 2003 to 2009 for one hospital. We have a reference to a hospital in 2008 and another one in 2008. We turn to page 29 and we have a hospital in the fall of 2009. Another one single-sourced a contract for information technology, beginning in March 2009. On page 30, we have this reference in 2002 to the hospital single-sourced contract that went on until 2009. I think that's where the minister was trying to somehow implicate me, but I'm sorry; I left the Ministry of Health in February 2001.

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If we take a look at this, the examples continue on page 30. In 2006 a hospital and a lobbying firm signed a letter of proposal. We have in 2009 a hospital engaging a

lobbying firm. We have another hospital that engaged a firm to lobby the government from 2005 to 2009.

So you know what? The reality is, the use of these consultants and the use of these lobbyists occurred, for the most part, during the life of this government, particularly in the more recent period of time, so for the minister to suggest otherwise is simply not accurate. Again, it is another attempt to divert attention away from this government and the use of consultants, and the use of Liberal-friendly consultants.

This bill obviously is a cover. It's a cover to divert attention away from the use of lobbyists and consultants by this government, lobbyists who were, for the most part, affiliated and connected to the Liberal Party. It's also intended to divert attention away from the fact that if you are an opposition MPP, it has become increasingly more difficult to lobby the government.

I just want to share a story with you, because I was the Minister of Health up until February 2001. When the Health Services Restructuring Commission went through the province of Ontario and made recommendations, there was an opportunity after the fact for communities to respond and say whether or not they agreed. I can tell you there was one particular situation that occurred up in Thunder Bay. The recommendation was to close five of the hospitals—and the government talks about us closing hospitals. Well, there were five. The recommendation by the commission was that two would remain open. So what happened?

Your own members, Michael Gravelle and Lyn McLeod, your former leader, lobbied me and said, "No, we want you to close them all"—all five. These are part of the five that you accuse us of closing. Your members wanted this. They said, "We want a new state-of-the-art medical centre in northwestern Ontario." And I said, "Okay. If you can present your case, I will listen. If you can present your case, I will speak to Premier Harris. I will take your case to cabinet."

Do you know what? Your two members lobbied. I listened. My Premier listened. My cabinet listened. And guess what? They got their new hospital. You can imagine their shock, because over and over again they said to me, both of them, "Elizabeth, we won't get it because we're Liberal ridings." And I said, "You will get it. If this is in the best interest of the people in your community, you'll get it."

So, ladies and gentlemen, we have moved far in this House. Mr. Speaker, you know of what I speak because you also were a Minister of Health who was responsive to opposition demands for health services. But we have moved far away from that, to a point where now members of the opposition are rarely given any information or it's rare for us to get a response to our requests for health services on behalf of our members.

This bill today, as I say, is really a diversion. It's regrettable that the government hasn't acknowledged that it needs to do a better job. As the minister has said, yes, MPPs should be the lobbyists, and let's hope that in the future they do listen to the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who certainly knows a whole lot about this portfolio.

This bill was based on what happened at eHealth. What happened at eHealth, as she mentioned, shook up the foundation of our health care system. How could millions of health care dollars end up being squandered away to the pockets of wealthy consultants? This was unimaginable in Ontario. How could this happen? But it did happen. It was there for everybody to see, and the government reacted: fired the Minister of Health; let go the deputy minister; fired the head of eHealth; let go half of the board of eHealth. We were cleaning house. This was not acceptable; things were about to change.

Then came the new report, and we see exactly the same thing, just on a bigger scale. Nothing had changed. What had changed, as she explained, is that access to the ministers in this government is becoming harder and harder. If you are not already a friend of the person who happens to be a minister, you are shut out. You need to pay people who are their friends in order to be heard. This flies in the face of what a democracy is all about. We were elected to represent the people who elected us. Ministers are elected to represent the people of Ontario. So when their elected representative comes to them and gets shut out—people need to communicate, so they line the pockets of well-connected friends of the Liberals so they can be heard.

The bill we have here, as my colleague said, has big holes in it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: My good friend from Kitchener–Waterloo—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yes, I am.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm hoping the riding hadn't changed names.

We're here at this point in this debate and have this bill before us because the government opened up this sector to the Auditor General. Under former governments, nobody knew these things. That's why we're here, and it's a good thing we're here. We've now discovered, because of this government having the Auditor General go in, the abuse that you are talking about today. Before, you couldn't know that. You couldn't know, for instance, that in early 1999, a hospital single-sourced a contract which has continued in operation since that time, with a firm developing, managing and providing ongoing IT technical services to the network. The total cost of this single-source consulting firm has been \$60 million.

A hospital engaged a consulting firm to provide project management services for a hospital redevelopment that started in 2002 and was completed in 2009. Approximately \$3.7 million was paid to this firm in two separate contracts.

Both contracts were single-source.

A hospital engaged a consultant since 1999 as a chief executive officer of a provincially funded initiative that administers many hospitals and health care providers. The hospital originally single-sourced the position to this consultant.

In 2002, a single-source contract valued at about \$51,000 went to a lobbying firm for a six-month period—six months: \$51,000 to this lobbyist.

What we are here talking about is a government that opened up this sector. We now know what happened. We're fixing it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to congratulate the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for, first of all, putting the truth to the fact that five hospitals in Thunder Bay were closed to build one state-of-the-art hospital. That same scenario happened in Sudbury. It happened in Port Hope, in Cobourg. It happened in Ottawa and it happened in Toronto as well. Hospitals were closed, yes, but state-of-the-art hospitals replaced them in those same communities.

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Secondly, the member talked about the local health integration networks and how they have a lack of communication. I have the example in my riding where the new Oakville hospital site was dedicated; it was dedicated in my riding. She said she received notice at 6 o'clock the night before, to make it difficult for them to show up. Well, I didn't receive any notice at all, not one notice. Liberal members from all the ridings around came to that site dedication, and I didn't receive any notice at all. The LHINs certainly weren't doing their job as far as local input was concerned in that case. I will be on their doorstep the day that we take control of this province and do away with LHINs, and I will be shaking their hands, saying good-bye and hoping that they have luck in the future finding a job.

The other situation that happened—the press releases are full of the phrase “full, proactive disclosure,” and yet when I read the bill itself and go through it very carefully, I can find no definition of what “full, proactive disclosure” means. I remain to be convinced that this bill is anything but a diversion and anything but a sham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm going to be speaking to this bill in around four minutes' time, and I look forward to that. Unfortunately, I won't be able to get all of my 20 minutes in today. That's okay. I'll start, and I'll resume the balance of my comments the next time the government chooses to call this bill.

It's remarkable that the government professes to be solving a problem when it was not government forces but in fact opposition forces, indeed New Democrats, who brought the committee to the point where the committee called upon the Auditor General. It's also New Democrats who have been raising in this Legislature, for two or two and a half weeks now, not just hospitals, but munici-

palities, universities, colleges, all those MUSH sectors that have been spending huge bucks of taxpayers' money—scarce, hard-earned taxpayers' money—on lobbyists to access a government that is otherwise inaccessible.

The problem that the minister has is that she says we don't need lobbyists, but the lobby industry says that if you don't have lobbyists, government won't be able to forge the important relationships that it has to have with municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals, among other things, including, I suppose, children's aid societies, so somebody is not telling the truth. You understand what I'm saying? Because the minister says you don't need lobbyists, and the very sophisticated lobby industry says it's impossible to penetrate the huge barriers around government without high-priced lobbyists. Somebody is not telling the truth, and I look forward to the committee hearings on this bill, because I suspect that the same lobbyists who have been criticizing the government for this bill will be coming forward in committee and explaining to the minister that she's wrong; that, indeed, this government is inaccessible, unapproachable, aloof and arrogant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? The honourable member for Barrie.

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: No, no; the honourable member is just slipping out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Are we done?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to thank the member for Halton, who I know has certainly worked very hard to lobby on behalf of his community for improved health care services, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, the member for Nickel Belt and, of course, the member for Welland.

I also want to add that the two hospitals in my community of Kitchener–Waterloo both support this legislation—Grand River Hospital and certainly St. Mary's hospital. I think, for the most part, the hospitals are happy to know that they hopefully will have access moving forward into the future. I don't think most of them wanted to get to a place where they felt that this government could only be accessed by using lobbyists. We know that on occasion there is a need for consultants for special projects, and I think we have to acknowledge that as well.

However, if there's one thing that comes out of this particular debate and the passage of this bill, I hope that we will, at the end of the day, have a government that is prepared to be more responsive to MPPs—all MPPs in this Legislature, not just the government MPPs.

As I said during my debate and my discussion, I think the bill here is certainly a response to the eHealth scandal and a billion dollars being spent, much of it on Liberal-connected lobbyists. It is a response to the second

scandal as well, the eHealth 2.0. But it also, I think, is an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the government doesn't listen to the people or MPPs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: As I say, I won't be able to finish my comments this morning because I've only got around 11 minutes left and I've got 20 minutes in me. I've got more than 20 minutes. I could do a lot more than 20 minutes on this foul matter, but of course the rules restrict me.

Let's understand what's going on here. We've got a government that's been in government for seven years: the Liberals. They're tired; we can see it. The public's tired of them; the polls tell us that. Seventy-six per cent of Ontarians say they want to see another party in power; 86% say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. So it's a tired government, in power for seven years.

The Auditor General confirms what New Democrats have been saying in question period now for several weeks. Andrea Horwath has been on her feet here in the Legislature, challenging the government and confronting them with information about lobbyists being hired by hospitals, universities and colleges, amongst others. Huge, huge amounts: This is a huge business. It's an enormous business. It's a billion-dollar business here in the province of Ontario, across the country, across North America.

The lobbyist industry is an integral part of fundraising for political parties, especially political parties in power. But the amazing thing is, you've got government backbenchers—and I understand why they might be quizzical about the whole matter, because they're not in the loop. But you've got a minister who feigns shock and awe and horror at the revelations of the Auditor General. "My goodness," she says. "How could this be? Lobbyists? On the public dollar? My goodness. I'm shocked," she says. "I'm horrified," she says. "I'm distressed," she says. She's like the piano player in the brothel who wants to pretend that he doesn't know what's going on upstairs.

So here we are. We've got a minister who's in denial. Who have these lobbyists been talking to? They've been talking to ministers and Premiers and senior staffers. For Pete's sake, when John Matheson from StrategyCorp—I don't know whether he was ever one of them, but when he came knocking on her door or took her out and wine and dined her—whether he did or not, at least somebody did—who did she think these people were? Just people wandering in off the street with big American Express platinum credit cards. Did she think they were people who were wandering and weren't sure where they were? They were looking for directions, help? Maybe call CAA for them?

For Pete's sake, lobbyists have been talking to the minister. Lobbyists wine and dine; they schmooze. And they organize fundraisers. Meet the Minister of Health at \$300 or \$400 a pop. Meet the Minister of Infrastructure at \$300 or \$400 a pop. I find it amazing. I find it truly amazing.

I was on the train to Toronto the other day from St. Catharines. I was over here, and a guy—he was one of these guys with the cellphone and the laptop, a little bit of a blowhard; he was talking far too loud. He wanted to make sure people heard him, because it was the weekend of the Liberal confab a couple of weeks ago, the mud-slinging seminar. This guy was talking to one of his colleagues: "Yup, yup. Yeah, I went to the" whatever "and I met the Premier and a couple of cabinet ministers." And I'm thinking, "You poor, dumb sucker. You probably paid big bucks for that, and the cabinet ministers that you met had no idea who you were, couldn't recall you if their lives depended on it. You got fished; you got suckered; you got snookered; you got taken; darn it, you got Ponzed. You've been had."

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How the lobby firms promote themselves is they highlight the people in those firms who have the political connections. Being the former chief of staff is pretty potent stuff for institutions out there that want to have access to government—being a former cabinet minister. The impression—wink, wink, nudge, nudge—is, "I can introduce you to my former colleagues, I can make things happen, I can grease the wheels," and from time to time they do.

It seems that there's almost a nasty sort of quid pro quo here, because the impression the public has out there is that if you don't hire the right lobbyist—wink, wink, nudge, nudge—in this instance, with the Liberal connections, your interests aren't going to be furthered very well. So what has the lobbyist industry become in many respects? It's become a pasture for political warhorses who are sent out to pasture; something of a sinecure, I suppose. You've done your political service; it's finally time to make the big bucks. Indeed, there will be people in this Legislature, when they're defeated in October, who will market themselves as potential lobbyists, who'll say they've got not just the know-how, but that they're in the know.

My problem, once again, and the government's problem, really, is that the lobby industry appears to be very, very outspoken with respect to how important they are in government relations.

The real failure of this bill is that the bill only applies to what I believe the Lobbyists Registration Act calls consultant lobbyists, lobbyists who are on retainer, lobbyists who you'll hire for a specific term—contract lobbyists as compared to in-house lobbyists.

What would be the effect of this legislation? The effect will be that the lobby industry will undoubtedly effectively persuade universities, schools, hospitals, municipalities to hire in-house lobbyists because the bill doesn't apply to them. The bill doesn't apply at all to lobbyists who are part of the corporate or bureaucratic or institutional structure of a particular public body that uses public funds.

The legislation is also very clear that it restricts utilizing public monies. The people of Ontario may say, "When I donate money to a hospital, that's public money,

or when a hospital makes money with the charges for parking, that's public money." No. That's not the money that this bill applies to. A hospital can then use contributions from the public—and all hospitals do big fundraising because, of course, they're underfunded—to hire lobbyists.

So this isn't even cosmetic. The blemish is still going to stick out like a raw pimple here on the face of a tired, old government—because the government is being less than forthcoming. I didn't say less than truthful; I know it's unparliamentary. I can't always say the things here that I want to, so I don't. If I said the government was being untruthful, I'd have to withdraw—and I withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I remind the honourable member that you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly, so I just ask you to be careful, please.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Which is why when I said the government was untruthful, I withdrew it right away, as I'm withdrawing it now. I'm good enough with the withdrawals here. I've done more than a few of them in my time, and from time to time I appreciate the Speaker helping me, but usually I'm on top of it. When I've said something unparliamentary, I usually know it, and that's why I'm speedy to withdraw it.

I say the government is not forthcoming. The government is not telling all that it's got to tell. The government is concealing a big chunk of the facts.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Not fulsome?

Mr. Peter Kormos: That was unparliamentary, Mr. Bailey. That was unparliamentary.

The government is letting the public toy with the impression that the government is actually responding to what it, the government, sees is a problem, and what it, the government, isn't responding to at all, because the government doesn't perceive it as a problem.

This government and the lobby industry work hand in hand, hand in glove. They're tight, they're intimate, they know each other well, they know each other so well. I'm oh, so looking forward, although it's a fait accompli now and it's oh, so very moot to concern oneself with George Smitherman's list of contributors—you understand that Joe Pantalone, the NDP candidate in the mayoralty campaign, who I am very proud of, released his list of contributors a week before the election date, October 25; so a week before that. Rob Ford, the successor to David Miller, the mayor-elect, the successful contender, released his contribution list in the days before the actual election. But George Smitherman just wouldn't. He just couldn't bring himself to do it. One wonders why he wouldn't want to be candid in the context of the two other contenders being so open about who was bankrolling their campaigns. I don't know.

Part of me really, really, really—I really, really wish we had that contribution list because I suspect it would lend credence to the argument that the opposition parties are making here. Please, if I'm wrong, I'll be the first person to admit it, but I suspect that we'll find all sorts of

familiar characters on George Smitherman's list of contributors. I suspect—and this, of course, explains why he would not want to reveal these—there will be people from the eHealth industry. I suspect there could be people with familiar Korean surnames, Samsung types. I suspect there will be more than a few lobbyists, because lobbyists saw the potential for grease at city hall—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1018 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Les and Marilyn Armstrong from the village of Plympton-Wyoming in the great riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like to introduce the parents of page Haadiyah Khan—her father, Shakeel Khan, and her mom, Halima—and her sister, Muneerah, visiting today in the Legislature.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Today the members of the Ontario Dental Association are hosting a reception here at Queen's Park for members. I'd like to welcome Dr. Kerr Banduk from my riding and invite all members to attend at 6 o'clock.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to introduce the parents of our page, Kimberly Ren from Mississauga South. Her mother, Lily Liu, and her father, Wayne Ren, are here today. They've come to watch Kimberly lead in today's procession.

I'd like to also acknowledge the grandparents of another page, Eric O'Brien. Grandparents Bill Hamilton and Margaret Hamilton are here, as well as his aunt, Lori Armour, visiting us today.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'd like to introduce to the House Pam Wieland and Charlie Peatman from 3M Canada. They're here today to receive a tour of our Legislature. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I am honoured to welcome to the House today the family of page Eric O'Brien from the great riding of Oxford and the city of Woodstock. They were previously introduced, but I want to introduce his grandparents, Margaret and Bill Hamilton, and his aunt and uncle, Lori and Tim Armour. I welcome them to Queen's Park and say that Eric is doing a wonderful job as a page.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to introduce to you today in the House OPP Constable Dawn Martin and her daughter Nicole. Dawn is the police coordinator for Crime Stoppers of Simcoe-Dufferin-Muskoka. They're over here in the crowd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further introductions?

I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and page Carina

Hochgeschurz, to welcome her mother, Colleen, and her grandmother Hiede Hochgeschurz to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the National Assembly of Pakistan led by Khurram Dastgir Khan. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature. Welcome all of you to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier concerning Premier McGuinty's refusal to hold his cabinet ministers to account.

After 48 hours, it's clear that we will not be given the unqualified apology we have asked for from the Premier and his Minister of Research and Innovation. Premier McGuinty, by his refusal to act, basically indicates that he is either unconcerned or condones the new innuendoes and baseless smears the minister made in his non-apology apology. In fact, the Premier seems so unconcerned about it, apparently he has not even contacted the minister directly to talk about this affair.

Acting Premier, I understand that Premier McGuinty has a lot invested in Minister Murray. He elevated him over the heads of many long-serving Liberal members. Is that why the Premier refuses to hold this minister to account?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the Premier indicated yesterday, the minister apologized to the people in question and to the opposition. The Premier found that to be the appropriate apology. I will just simply reiterate that the Premier's point of view is from that perspective. We believe the apology was appropriate, complete, and the matter is behind us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, quite frankly, Acting Premier, I suspect that you know in your heart, we know and the general public knows that the minister has yet to make a clear and unconditional apology. People would like to see an apology without all the ifs, ands and buts.

The problem here is that this is a broader pattern of the Premier refusing to hold his ministers to account. The Premier claims that he is going to take the high road, but his cabinet ministers or campaign team attack his critics while the Premier looks away.

We need to look no further than the nasty whisper campaign against Ontario's Ombudsman this spring, where the Premier's top campaign strategist accused the Ombudsman of equally deplorable things. After weeks of letting this go on, all the Premier had to say was that the debate was getting "a little out of hand." He never sent a strong signal that this was wrong, and he held no one to account. Isn't that the reason this keeps happening, because the Premier refuses to hold his ministers to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, in fact, I was just reflecting on when Tory cabinet ministers spent \$1,600 on bar tabs and expensed it. I was reflecting last night on when that party and their government tried to take funding away from the Provincial Auditor after he had been particularly critical of that government.

The Premier of Ontario has laid out a plan to get Ontario's economy back on track, to create jobs, to make our economy more competitive, more prosperous. We have a lot of work to do on that. The Premier and his ministers and members of provincial Parliament are committed to creating jobs and building a stronger economy for a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I can understand why the Acting Premier is uncomfortable with answering these basic questions, but clearly a pattern has emerged where the Premier claims to take the high road but rewards those who do his attacks.

As you know, Acting Premier, members of your cabinet and senior campaign team are closely involved with the Working Families Coalition, an American-style election campaign group that has spent some \$7 million on attack ads on PC candidates. After the election, we saw Premier McGuinty reward Patrick Dillon with plum appointments to the WSIB, Infrastructure Ontario, the College of Trades, and also send millions of dollars to his senior campaign adviser and pollster for Working Families, Don Guy. I expect that Ontario families will see more of these types of attacks in the time ahead.

I ask the Acting Premier, why has the Premier established this pattern of condoning and rewarding this type of work?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier of Ontario has established a record of accountability and transparency that was sadly absent. It was sadly absent when Michael Gourley got more than \$3 million in contracts. We brought that openness and transparency to Hydro One, and because of the openness and transparency, we also know that his adviser Mark Spiro led the fight to protect big pharmacy, against the interests of average Ontarians. We also know that Tory lobbyists associated with the member opposite have been very active in lobbying, and so we're about transparency and accountability. That's why we undid many of the things they did, like specifically exempting Hydro One and OPG. We'll continue to build on that record of transparency, and at the same time, build a stronger economy and more jobs for all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PREMIER'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: The problem is that the McGuinty government only makes a commitment to transparency after they get caught with

their hands in the cookie jar over and over again. We've had three consecutive scandals: the lottery and gaming corporation, and back-to-back scandals like eHealth and eHealth 2.0, where dollars were from taken patient care to reward Liberal insiders.

And it's no wonder that the Minister of Research and Innovation gives out a non-apology apology, because he's learning from the Premier himself. In his video confession over eHealth, Premier McGuinty said he was sorry. He said he would not have this happen again. But less than one year later, we saw hundreds of millions of health care dollars go to well-connected insiders and bloated consultant contracts through eHealth 2.0. If the Premier won't hold himself accountable for his own apologies, why should we expect him to hold his minister to account?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Building a strong economy in these times involves difficult choices. This government has made choices. We have chosen to invest in health care and education. We have chosen to work to create more jobs for all Ontarians. This government is going to continue on that path.

Governments of all stripes make difficult decisions and sometimes don't get them right. And when you don't get them right, I think it's appropriate to start and work even harder still to correct them. The Premier of Ontario has a record of openness and transparency, of investing in health care and education and building a cleaner environment for our children. That's a record we're proud of. That's a record we'll take to the people of Ontario. That's a record we'll stack up against that member and his party any day of the week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, the McGuinty government has made choices, all right. Instead of helping families who have children waiting for life-saving pharmaceutical products, instead of helping families who need to get a loved one into a long-term-care home, you chose to give out hundreds of millions of dollars to Liberal-friendly consultants and insiders, and that's why Ontario families are looking for a change from the tired, out-of-ideas McGuinty government.

The Premier has made similar non-apology apologies, always filled with ifs, ands and buts. When he spoke about Sarah Kramer, the Premier said, "It is obvious that we made a mistake," but he relied on the advice of Alan Hudson. After the McGuinty Liberals passed the secret G20 law, he said, "It was a major mistake not to have publicized the change in the law," but he denied any wrongdoing.

Acting Premier, why do you think these kinds of boondoggles are ever going to stop when Premier McGuinty refuses to hold anyone accountable?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, choices have been made. When given a choice, that member and his party closed 29 hospitals. When given a choice to invest in health care and to build a stronger health care system, they chose to compare nurses to hula hoop workers. They chose not to invest; they chose not to do things that are important for a

strong economic future. When given a choice between keeping kids in school and fighting teachers, they cost kids more than 10 million days of education and learning time in this province.

Yes, sir, this is all about choices. This is a government that will choose the people of Ontario through strong policies designed to create jobs, build a better education system, a better health care system and a cleaner environment. That's what the choices are about. The people of Ontario will have a clear choice, and they will reject you and all you stand for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Members from Simcoe North and Oxford.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The pattern of the Premier's non-apology apologies extends to families in Caledonia. While the Premier says he's sorry, he has refused to hold to account the lawbreakers and what they've done to Caledonia families, including intimidation, home invasions and violence—these things all detailed in Christie Blatchford's new book, expressing very clearly the failure of the McGuinty government to govern and to protect its citizens equally.

It is an extraordinary failure of leadership. No wonder the Minister of Innovation refuses to apologize, because Dalton McGuinty does not keep his word when he—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): First, withdraw the comment. Secondly, I remind the honourable member that he should not be using first names.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw the comment.

If Premier McGuinty does not keep his promises, how can we expect the minister to be held to account?

I ask the Acting Premier: Why is Premier McGuinty making Caledonia families who work hard and play by the rules fend for themselves instead of holding lawbreakers accountable?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government of Ontario has worked hard with our First Nations communities across Ontario, and all communities, to build a better future for all Ontarians. It's an inclusive future that speaks to the best values of Ontarians. It's a future that speaks to resolving issues without violence, without the use of police. It's a future that speaks to job creation in our northern communities, where far too many aboriginal children go to bed hungry.

When that member and his party were given the choice, we know what happened there. We know what the inquiry said. When given those choices, that party made the wrong choices. It chose expediency over peace. It chose bad decisions over good decisions.

We will continue to build a stronger future for all Ontarians, the residents of Caledonia and our First Nations, but at the same time showing peace—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second.

New question.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's to the Acting Premier. Why don't Ontario families have the right to know whether their local hospitals and LHINs were squandering millions of health care dollars on insider lobbyists and consultants?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that expanded the authority of the Auditor General to look at hospitals. Prior to our action, the Auditor General simply did not have that authority. We expanded the power, and then we specifically asked the Auditor General to go in and look at hospitals, to look at LHINs, to look at our ministry and examine the use of consultants, including lobbyists.

The Auditor General did a thorough report. He reported back, and what he found was simply not acceptable. That's why we've taken the action we have by introducing legislation that addresses all of the issues and recommendations raised by the Auditor General.

As the member opposite knows, the Auditor General does not identify the lobbyists and does not identify the consultants. In fact, he does not attach the findings to the individual hospitals and LHINs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every single one of the 19 hospitals and LHINs investigated by the Auditor General had big problems with consultants and lobbyists winning big at the expense of front-line care. There's a good reason, therefore, to believe that the exact same problems—similar problems—exist in the rest of Ontario's hospitals and LHINs. So why doesn't the McGuinty government call in the Auditor General to make sure we stop diverting precious health care dollars from front-line care once and for all?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite makes my case for why we need to take action with legislation. What I hope I'm hearing is that she and her party will in fact support the legislation that we've introduced. The leader of the third party is absolutely right: The Auditor General did not give a clean bill of health to any of the organizations he looked at. Every single LHIN, every single hospital that the auditor examined had problems. That's good enough for me. I know the problems are throughout the system. That's why we're introducing legislation.

If the Auditor General chooses to continue to look at this issue, he is free to do that. We do not instruct the Auditor General. He is free to do whatever he wants to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One hospital paid a lobbyist \$275,000 over the last four years. That's the equivalent of two hours of home care a day for 350 people in Hamilton and London. New Democrats think that the

government should ask the Auditor General to investigate all hospitals and LHINs. Why is the McGuinty government refusing to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to accountability, the NDP cannot have it both ways. They cannot on one hand call for more investigation and on the other hand call the legislation we've introduced worthless. They cannot have it both ways.

The people of this province expect us to solve the problems when we become aware of the problems. We are abundantly aware of the problems because the Auditor General has described them very clearly. Our job is to fix the problems and that's what we're doing. I do hope that both parties opposite will in fact support us on this.

CONSULTANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. In another sole-source contract, another sole-source deal, one consulting company received \$180,000 for every consultant it employed. It's clear that well-connected insiders lined their pockets while emergency rooms closed and hallway medicine became the norm in Ontario in many communities.

Why is the McGuinty government continuing to protect the identity of all of these consultants?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's incumbent upon all of us in this Legislature to accurately represent the opinion of officers of this House, the Auditor General being one. The Auditor General was asked specifically if he found evidence of favouritism for political insiders. His answer was very clear: He did not find that. The party opposite may wish to create the fiction, but they are not reflecting the opinion of the Auditor General. When it comes to this issue, I will take the word of the Auditor General over the insinuations of the opposition any day of the week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General found that one consultant earned \$1,100 per day without even having a contract and that the same consultant went nearly \$60,000 over budget.

Instead of protecting the consultants who lined their pockets on the public health care dime, why won't the McGuinty government simply release their names?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is very important legislation that we have introduced to respond to the findings of the Auditor General. I have to tell you that others are supportive of this legislation. Let me quote Dr. Ann Cavoukian, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. Here's what the Information and Privacy Commissioner has to say about our legislation: The introduction of legislation to bring hospitals under Ontario's freedom-of-information legislation is "a major step forward for openness and transparency, leading to greater accountability." These are the words from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. She also praised the government for bringing forward the new rules under the

proposed Broader Public Sector Accountability Act and ushering in an era of greater openness and transparency for the citizens of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Public dollars that should have been invested in hiring nurses and providing home care services and long-term care were instead blown on high-priced insider lobbyists and consultants, all under this government's watch. The McGuinty government can now side with the families who have seen front-line care suffer or they can side with well-connected consultants and lobbyists who got rich at the expense of our health care system. Who is this government going to side with?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very clearly on the side of the people of this province. We are on the side of the taxpayers of this province and we are on the side of the patients of this province.

The issues that were raised by the Auditor General are simply unacceptable, are terribly disappointing, and require decisive action. That is why we introduced legislation the very same day that the auditor came out with his report. We are taking action because we want better health care. We want every dollar possible going to front-line health care.

We have some work ahead of us. The hospitals are supportive of this approach. They, too, understand that we need to do better when it comes to transparency and accountability. I look forward to a time in this House when the members opposite are going to be complaining about what has been exposed through that freedom-of-information legislation. But what it means is, we're getting better, we're getting stronger and we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. If the minister is truly sorry for the defamatory messages he posted on Twitter, then why hasn't he taken them down?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I believe they are down. If they are not, I will check. I appreciate the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We appreciate that, so we're halfway there. Now I would just simply ask that the minister issue an unequivocal apology with respect to this matter.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Sometimes we do things that are regrettable. I have apologized over the last two days in every way I can imagine, unqualified. I was asked the question several times; I gave unqualified apologies yesterday. I regret my remarks. I'm not sure how many other ways I can apologize.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. We're joined today by Mr. Pietro Valeriani,

who is in the west members' gallery. Mr. Valeriani and at least half a dozen of his neighbours in the village of Weston in northwest Toronto came home earlier this week to find a letter from Metrolinx. The letter says that their homes need to be acquired to accommodate the air link from downtown Toronto to the airport. At no point over the last five years were Mr. Valeriani and his neighbours told that they would be losing their homes. In fact, they were told the exact opposite. How could their government blindside them this way?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the leader of the third party for the question. As she knows, the air-rail link, the work that's being done on the Georgetown south corridor, will increase service for GO passengers, will allow for the air-rail link to be completed. The tunnel that is being built—and I understand that there's a meeting tonight to talk about it—is very much part of what the community has wanted and has asked for.

I know the member for York South-Weston has worked very closely with the community. She has been reaching out to the community. But the issue here is that GO has been reaching out to the residents in this community. Since the summer, GO has been involved in extensive community consultation to ensure that community members know exactly what the construction processes are and the go-forward and that they know they have options in terms of their properties and the disruption—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: These are not just houses; they are homes. Mr. Valeriani has lived there for 20 years. It's where he cared for his wife when she passed away. He's 64 years old and he doesn't want to be forced out of his home. He's now dealing with incredible stress, incredible emotional turmoil, because of this letter that was so unceremoniously delivered to his front door.

Will the McGuinty government immediately order Metrolinx to look at all options other than, besides, expropriation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Metrolinx is in the process this morning of getting in touch with the families who have been confused by this letter that has been sent. As I say, there have been multiple outreaches—I'm not going to talk about a specific case—over the summer and over the previous weeks, but Metrolinx is once again reaching out to the specific families involved. There are options that families have in the broadest sense.

1100

What I will say is that if the way the letter was written was not clear enough in terms of laying out options, we take responsibility for that. We will make sure that, going forward, it is much clearer what the options are. Families do have options as this project goes forward. We will continue to make sure that Metrolinx does the outreach that's necessary because, of course, people don't want to have surprises. They want to know what their options are,

and I take full responsibility for making sure that they know what those options are.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Providing quality health care and health care options for the people of Ontario is of utmost importance to all of us in government. We've seen extensive investment throughout the health care system that has allowed significant improvements in wait times, access to care, alternative care options and hospital infrastructure. It wasn't too long ago when we saw what cuts to health care meant for families across Ontario and the difference it can make when a government invests in front-line care to support better health care outcomes.

I have recently been told that this government has met their target of attaching one million patients to a doctor. Could the minister please tell the House more about this important milestone?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Mississauga South is absolutely correct. In 2003, we inherited a devastating shortage of family physicians in this province. We promised to attach 500,000 Ontarians to a family doctor, and we kept that promise. In 2007, we made a promise to 500,000 more Ontarians that we would attach them to primary care, and we have kept that promise a year ahead of schedule. Promises made, promises kept.

A million patients is quite the feat: It's some 500 Air Canada Centres. It's more than the population of the city of Ottawa. It's 16 people every hour, every day of the week, 24 hours a day, since we were elected. We did it by giving patients more options. That's why we've got 151 family health teams up and running; we've got 49 more on the way. We're adding 25 nurse practitioner—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Minister, for sharing this news. I know that Ontarians are pleased to see that the government has made tremendous strides in improving health care for families across the province.

Access to care has always been a concern for my constituents. We all know how important it is to avoid an emergency room for simple health issues. However, ensuring that Ontarians can access different health care options is vital to ensure that we aren't bogged down in our emergency rooms with minor illnesses.

While this government has made tremendous strides in providing access, more can always be done. Could the minister please tell this House what is being done to ensure access to health care options?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's true that too often Ontarians turn to their emergency department when they don't have a family doctor. That's why this government has created a variety of different options to provide Ontarians with the care they need in a timely manner. One of those initiatives is the greatest-ever expansion of community health centres. We're adding 49 new community health centres and satellites. Through our Health Care

Connect initiative, that care can be found through the Ministry of Health website or by telephone. We can find you a family doctor or a nurse practitioner, no matter where in this province you are living.

We've also got HealthForceOntario working, helping to recruit doctors from around the world to come practise in Ontario. In fact, through the great work of HealthForceOntario, we have reversed the brain drain. We now have more doctors moving from the United States to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Last Saturday, you attacked my leader and my party. A look back into your history shows that you have a pattern of sending attack messages via Twitter.

In the middle of the G20, when our men and women in uniform were working hard to keep our city safe, you used Twitter to call them "bashers." Why were you attacking our men and women in uniform?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will go back and check in detail. I certainly don't believe that.

My partner served in the Canadian Armed Forces for a great chunk of his life. I've done lots of work with the Armed Forces. I can't tell you how personal a commitment and support I've had.

If the gentleman had actually looked back through my history—he should spend some time with my friends at the Princess Patricia's light infantry in Winnipeg and look at the care and support and the kind of commitment I had for that particular regiment, of which I'm tremendously proud.

I'm very proud of my partner, who is gay, and the duress—and the things he fought for in the service of this country.

I hold the Canadian Armed Forces in the highest regard.

People in my community have had to put up with a lot more discrimination in order to serve in the same way that so many other people did.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind the member—I just checked the question, and I trust his supplementary is going to be tied in to his role as a minister. The question that you just asked—and I had to confirm—he was not a minister at the time that your question referred to.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay. In the middle of the G20, you directed another statement to the Toronto police via Twitter. In the statement, you asked them: "Why did you?"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would say to the member that the question you are asking right now does not concern the conduct of the member at the time. He was not a minister at the time.

I'm going to ask that you phrase your question to either the current situation—it has to be under the current

situation. You can't talk about something that was when he was not the minister.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Okay. Then I'd like to know from the minister if he understands the seriousness of what happened at the G20, and that the problem was that the McGuinty cabinet passed a secret law allowing that to happen, allowing the secrecy. Yet at the same time, he puts it on his Twitter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to pass. New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday at subcommittee, the McGuinty government killed my inclusionary zoning bill.

Is the McGuinty government really opposed to inclusionary zoning, even though they passed it in this House twice and municipalities across Ontario, including Hazel herself, demand it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We're very supportive of inclusionary housing. It was your bill and your amendment we were opposed to. We didn't think it achieved what we wanted it to.

We want to make sure we get it right. While we welcome your input—it's very helpful input, I might add—we felt that your amendments and proposals were flawed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My amendment simply called for a change to the Planning Act to allow for inclusionary zoning. It couldn't have been milder.

Vancouver; San Francisco; Atlanta; London, UK; and numerous other jurisdictions have implemented inclusionary zoning—15,000 units in Washington, DC, since 2003; 9,000 in San Francisco; in Boston, 1,000 new affordable units in one year alone, and over \$20 million in fees collected through the years 2000 to 2007.

Inclusionary zoning costs the government nothing and would create desperately needed affordable homes. Why is the McGuinty government opposing inclusionary zoning?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, she said it herself: Her amendment was weak, and we didn't think it was done properly. It was obviously more designed to get a bit of media attention as opposed to dealing with the real issues around inclusionary housing.

Let me just remind the people of Ontario—I heard the numbers from other communities—that we have now created some 76,500 units of affordable housing. In March 2009, we invested \$1.2 billion to renovate 94,000 social housing units, build 4,500 new units and, most importantly, create 23,000 jobs. That member and her party voted against it.

I was glad to hear her say that her amendment was very weak. It was.

We take these matters seriously. We want to have provisions for inclusionary housing. We're going to do it right and reject the simple, media-attention-grabbing, weak amendments that member put forward.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Education. For months, the opposition has made it clear that they do not support full-day kindergarten. They voted against Bill 242 and have called full-day kindergarten "a frill."

Yet I've spoken with many constituents out in western Mississauga who have heard about our government's and our province's strong commitment to early learners. They want to understand how this investment in this challenging economic time is good for our province.

Minister, would you please explain the impact of full-day kindergarten in light of the criticisms levelled against it?

1110

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to remind the people of Ontario that investing in our earliest learners is one of the very best things we can do to improve student success and student outcomes in the province of Ontario. We know that. Families know that. Parents have told us that they want this program.

In addition to that, in addition to building for future student success, we are also enabling another type of educator to play a very important role with kindergarten teachers, and they would be early childhood educators. What I can say is that when our program is fully implemented, we will have 20,000 early childhood educators and 3,800 more teachers working with our youngest learners. That is an investment that we know is going to enable our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The principal point that people in western Mississauga have asked me is that they like the program; they'd like to see more of it. With more students expected to enter full-day kindergarten, I expect we're going to need more staff to support these students. I know that there is one teacher and one early childhood educator assigned to each classroom for full-day kindergarten.

Would the minister tell us how the province is getting ready for this influx of students and what steps Ontario is taking to ensure that our students have the proper support?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: As the honourable colleague outlined in his question, under full-day kindergarten we have a registered early childhood educator who works alongside the certified teacher to provide two qualified educators in each full-day kindergarten classroom. ECEs are also responsible for the integrated before- and after-school programs that are offered as part of the overall program.

I'm pleased to report to the Legislature that there are currently over 27,000 ECEs registered in Ontario. In addition, there are 5,829 students currently enrolled in

early childhood education programs in Ontario, and nearly 700 people have returned to school to pursue careers as early childhood educators through the Second Career program over the past two years.

In fact, the Minister of Education and myself, very recently, visited a class of early childhood educators and were able to congratulate, at first hand, workers who had been laid off—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, this afternoon we will be debating my private member's bill, Bill 83. The Respect Our Homes Coalition, along with People First of Ontario and Community Living Ontario, held a news conference this morning explaining why this was such an important issue for families and organizations supporting people with an intellectual disability.

Minister, will you support the safety, dignity and respect of individuals who do not want their homes picketed during times of labour unrest?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me welcome into the House people from Community Living and the parents of those that we serve in Ontario.

My ministry's primary concern continues to be the health and safety of individuals in developmental services' residential accommodations. We have invested over \$500 million in new, ongoing funding for developmental services. That is a 51% increase since 2003. Over \$240 million of this went to creating and increasing services, as well as enhancing wages and salaries.

Since taking office, we have committed over \$175 million in funding to help adults with developmental disabilities live in communities, creating services and supports for more than 27—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I think there's a bit of a time warp between here and there. I asked you very specifically if you were going to be supporting Bill 83.

People from Quinte West, Kawartha Lakes, Walkerton, Chatham-Kent, London, Campbellford, Brighton, Prince Edward county, St. Catharines and Brampton are all coming to Queen's Park this afternoon to listen our debate and are looking for leadership from you on this issue. They've worked hard to break down barriers and create inclusive communities.

Minister, will you support Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will remind the member of the Tory party that her and her party voted against every investment that this government proposed for developmental services.

I will say to her that, on this side of the House, we respect very much the workers of Community Living. They get up every morning—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's about human rights.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows the rules. She can call a late show if she doesn't like the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: People on this side of the House respect the workers of Community Living. They get up in the morning and do a very good job for the most vulnerable that we serve.

This government here is not afraid of unions; we work very closely with the unions, contrary to those on the other side of the House.

I congratulate and thank every worker from Community Living today, and I wish that we will continue—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health. The chief and council of Eabametoong First Nation have declared a state of emergency in the community of Fort Hope. Since January of this year, there have been three murders, 61 assaults, 47 arsons and 73 drug-related incidents. I quote from the chief and council's emergency resolution:

"Whereas: the community and the people are at ... risk from the current prescription drug abuse epidemic...."

And: "Whereas: the threat posed by prescription drug abuse epidemic and community violence" requires "immediate intervention and direct measures...."

Can the Minister of Health tell us what the McGuinty government is doing to respond to this very clear state of emergency?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On Friday night, I spoke with Chief Nate, and on Saturday evening, I was in Eabametoong. I spoke with Chief Nate, met with the council and met with the acting chief of the NAPS police service. I spoke to the chief and council about their seven-point proposal.

It's a very difficult time, and what I committed to is that I would immediately contact my colleague ministers and ministries, including the Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth Services—I had already been in contact with my colleague the Minister of Community Safety—and that we would work with the federal government, which I understood was trying to get in yesterday and wasn't able to because of the weather, and the chief and council on how we can support the council in moving forward on their seven-point plan and a better future for the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I just spoke with one of the councillors, Councillor O'Keese, and I went through the emergency resolution with him. He is very clear, and the emergency resolution is very clear, that there is a real crisis in the community in terms of the abuse of prescription drugs. This community and other First Nations have asked this government repeatedly for the tools to deal with this crisis. They're very clear: You have many, many young people who are addicted to prescription drugs, and they are responsible for much of the violence.

I want to know, what has this government done on that front to help these communities in crisis deal with this very specific problem?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: That was one of the issues that we spoke about when I was there Saturday evening. It is a very serious issue in that and other communities.

I am very pleased that the Minister of Health has introduced legislation which will begin, with the tools that we have at our disposal, to start to get at the abuse of prescription drugs. We are coordinating, the Ministry of Health with the lead, with the federal government and with, as I say, my other colleague ministers on how to provide the tools to make sure that the community has the tools to address this very serious issue, which does not have easy answers, does not have simple answers—it has been here for some period of time—but does require our involvement at every level. It requires effective enforcement, community leadership and coordination with the federal government. We're going to work with the community to see how we can get them to a better place.

1120

TAXATION

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, I know you've been talking a lot lately about how the HST plan is going to help the economy by creating jobs and making Ontario more competitive, and I commend you for that, Minister.

Over the past year, our government has been out speaking in public about the HST tax plan and explaining what its various effects are, particularly on the real estate sector. But, Minister, I tell you that there is still confusion out there regarding what the HST is applied to and what it isn't applied to. Specifically in Willowdale, I've had a lot of questions from people confused about how HST applies to the purchase of a home.

Minister, will you clarify how HST affects Ontarians when they're purchasing a home?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member from Willowdale for his question. When it comes to buying a home, we know that buying a home is one of the largest investments that Ontarians will make.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm having challenges to hear the honourable minister, and she is just to my right, so I would just—we've done so well this week.

Minister.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, like I said, buying a home is one of the largest investments that Ontarians will make in their lifetime. What I can say is that, simply put, HST is not on resale homes. That is the fact. There is no HST on resale homes and there is no HST on the sale of new homes up to \$400,000. That covers 93% of all homes that are sold in Ontario.

The previous Minister of Revenue and I myself will continue to travel the province and talk to Ontarians about the misconceptions and make sure they know what is and what isn't covered—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: The Ontario Real Estate Association put out a press release yesterday regarding misconceptions that still exist amongst Ontarians regarding HST and home purchases. The Ontario Real Estate Association has concerns that misinformation that exists in the public is actually hurting the housing industry, and they're calling on this government to clarify the information around HST and home purchases.

Minister, quite specifically, what are you going to do to get the correct information into the hands of Ontario home purchasers?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: My office has been in touch, in fact, with both the Ontario Real Estate Association and the Toronto Real Estate Board to offer our support.

I want to assure this House that I will continue to travel the province and talk to Ontarians about the facts about the HST. But again, the simple truth is that there is no HST on the resale of homes, and in fact, there is no HST on any new homes up to \$400,000. That's 93% of the homes sold in Ontario.

The facts are clear. We will continue to go across the province and let everyone know about what is and what isn't covered under the HST.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. We understand the phased approach to the 407 extension—we don't agree with it, but understand it. However, the previous extension that took the 407 into the region of Durham was designed much to resolve the province's responsibility for managing the end-of-line gridlock that was being created in Markham as a result of the 407 ending at Highway 48.

Minister, is the province committing to take on the tens or hundreds of millions of dollars of financial responsibility as a result of the end-of-line gridlock should the 407 temporarily end at Simcoe Street in Oshawa?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, let me just say that I think it's wonderful that on this side of the House, we are pushing ahead with the 407 despite the economic downturn. I have to say that in spite of that—and we're building a road that will remain in the ownership of the provincial government—I think it's wonderful to be

answering this question from a member who is part of the party that actually gave away a valuable asset.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that we are working very closely with the communities. I understand that the member opposite has concerns. We have done the full EA. He knows full well that this is the first stage and that we fully intend that the 407 will go to 35/115.

In the interim, at this first stage, we are working with the mayors and the communities on Simcoe road to make sure that we mitigate the impact of the traffic coming off the highway at that point. I understand it's a concern. I've spoken—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Kevin Pask was the ministry lead on the 407 and made it abundantly clear that the 407 end-of-line gridlock at Highway 48 would have to be dealt with by the province. In light of the exorbitant cost to shore up the end-of-line gridlock, would it not be more financially responsible to extend the ending of the 407 to an area that will have a minimal financial impact, as opposed to Simcoe Street in Oshawa, which will cost millions of dollars?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say to the people who have been involved in advocating on this road, I want you to know that the member for Peterborough has been a huge advocate to get this right. He has worked with us consistently and tirelessly, and made the point that this road to the east needs to be completed. We've done the work. We've looked at the traffic patterns. The decision has been made to take it to Simcoe Street. We are working with the communities in that area to mitigate the impact of the traffic coming off the highway at that point.

But I go back to my original point. It is a huge boon to communities east of Toronto that we are extending the 407 east, even though the economic downturn could have dictated that we choose not to go ahead with that. We are honouring our commitment that was made as part of the Flow agreement. We're moving ahead on stage one, and we will continue to work with the communities to make sure that the impact of that road is mitigated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

My colleague just told you the story of what's going on in Eabametoong in northwestern Ontario with the state of emergency. We're talking about three murders, 73 drug charges, 61 assaults, 47—let me put this in Toronto numbers: If that was happening in Toronto, we would have had 14,250 murders in the last 10 months. If that was happening in Toronto, we would have had 346,750 drug charges, and the list goes on.

When Bill 101 came, I said, "You have to go to the First Nations. Bill 101 won't work in the First Nations the way it is written now. It has to change." Why is it that the minister refused?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will refer the supplementary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, but I do want to talk about Bill 101. I want to stress that I think one of the very first times I heard about the issue of the abuse of prescription drugs was from a First Nations chief who, in a very passionate and strong way, described the problem that was happening in his particular community.

Subsequently, I heard from many chiefs who described the devastating impact of prescription drug abuse in their communities. Those leaders in their communities have directly impacted our decision to move ahead with this very important legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Bill 101 is written in a way that is city-centric. It is written in a way that says that people double-doctor—they go to one, two, three, four, five different doctors and get all of those prescriptions—and go to one, two, three, four, five different pharmacies and get all of those dispensed.

None of this makes sense in the First Nations. None of this makes sense in northern Ontario. This bill is made for people who live in cities, and yes, they need help, but what about the rest of us who live in northern Ontario and the rest of us who care about the people in the First Nations? Why won't we slow down Bill 101 so that we include the needs of the First Nations and we include the needs of rural and northern Ontario, which is struggling with an epidemic of prescription drug abuse?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have nothing but respect for the passion of the member opposite. This is a devastating problem in all of our communities, but nowhere is this problem more profound and more damaging than in our First Nations communities. I am well aware of that.

What is very important is that we work together with the tools we are going to be creating to monitor the prescribing and the dispensing of these very powerful prescription narcotics. It will have an impact in First Nations communities. They do not manufacture those drugs in First Nations communities. I visited Moosonee this summer, where they no longer actually carry those prescription narcotics in the hospital there. People are getting the prescription drugs off reserve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, Ontario families know a sustainable water source is vital to our well-being and our way of life. A great deal of the world's fresh water is found right in our own backyard and in the Great Lakes. A key plank of the Open Ontario act is to ensure Ontario

becomes a centre of excellence in developing clean water technology. Ontario has already been identified as a leader in the emerging market of clean water, a key driver of economic prosperity.

Minister, protecting the environment by creating good green jobs seems to be a priority for the McGuinty government. But will becoming a leader in clean water technology actually help Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. On this side of the House, we do not believe that protecting the economy and protecting the environment are mutually exclusive. If we build an economy based on green technology, we are protecting the environment and we're creating great jobs today for our children and for our grandchildren.

Let me assure all Ontarians of one thing: The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act before this House is about exporting our technology for clean water to a world that needs clean water. But it is not about exporting our amazing, vital resource, the clean water resources that we have right here in Ontario. It's about exporting our technology and creating jobs right here in Ontario.

It follows on a wonderful legacy of conservation. We're going to ensure that conservation of water becomes part of the way of life here in Ontario, and that also will lead to new—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: The world relies on these Ontario companies to provide the technology to keep them safe. My constituents in Ottawa–Orléans would be pleased to know that Ontario is creating green jobs and exporting our technologies around the world. Ontario's fresh water supply is a limited resource, one that must be cherished and protected for future generations. Some residents in my riding want to make sure that any economic development does not come at the expense of this valuable resource.

Minister, can you tell this House how the proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act will actually improve water conservation in Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: First of all, I would say that the clean water technology market, globally, is \$400 billion and that that market is growing at 15% a year. Why? Because there are so many nations and so many communities that do not have what we have. We have been blessed with one of the greatest natural resources of clean water in the world. What we're focused on as a government has been to keep our water clean from source to tap. Because of those investments that we've made, we are global leaders. The world is looking for solutions that are made and invented here in Ontario, solutions that will lead to good, green jobs right here in Ontario, the jobs that we want for our children. There are some 22,000 people in the province of Ontario today already employed in that sector. We lead the world in ultraviolet disinfection, in membrane technology, in the design of compact sewage treatment plants. All of those things are

available now to a world that needs them. It's important for us to pass this act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Acting Premier: The Premier said, "When you enter public life, and particularly when you serve as minister of the crown, special standards apply." It says a lot about the pre-judgment of Premier McGuinty and the standards he sets for his ministers that he chose to add someone who attacks the police to be Minister of Research and Innovation. Before Premier McGuinty picked the minister over all the other long-serving and loyal Liberals in the backbenches, the minister made another public statement about the police via Twitter. He asked: "Why did you confine many of my constituents and friends for four hours in the pouring rain?"

Don't he and the Premier know that the answer to that question is because the McGuinty cabinet passed a secret law allowing it? Could you comment on that, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This House, this Parliament, deals with tremendous issues all the time, and I have great respect for the integrity of all members. I believe all members do their very best, and I want to say to my colleague the Minister of Research and Innovation that I've rarely met a man in public life with his integrity and character.

This line of questioning demeans all of us. I believe it adds to what was already an unfortunate circumstance that was apologized for. I believe the Leader of the Opposition is a man of integrity. I believe the member opposite is a man of integrity. I've had the opportunity to work with him on many, many issues. I think we can all raise the level of public debate if we acknowledge mistakes, and we correct them when we're wrong. If I had a nickel for every misstep I've taken in my public life, I'd be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The issue is the Premier's judgment and the qualities he looks for in a cabinet minister. The OLG scandals prove he's not looking for accountability. Long service doesn't seem to matter. The pattern of the minister's attack emails must be it.

Why did Premier McGuinty pick the member from Toronto Centre when there are members of the Liberal caucus who don't have a record of ill-conceived attack messages?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm not even going to allow that question. It's not for the Acting Premier to get inside the brain of the Premier as to his decision-making process.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He should be here, then.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North as well knows the issue of dealing with the attendance of members.

The time for question period has ended.

VISITORS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure to have in the members' gallery here my parents, my father and my mother, Antonio and Italia Berardinetti. My father is 80 years old today. I just want to wish him a happy birthday. Between them is my beautiful wife, Michelle Berardinetti, who is the councillor-elect for ward 35 in Scarborough Southwest.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to correct some comments I made in this Legislature on October 26. I want to thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing this to my attention this morning in debate on Bill 122. I did make an inaccurate statement about the member holding a ministerial portfolio in a certain year. I referred to four contracts single-sourced by hospitals during the Conservative government, attributing three to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and one to the former member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. In fact, two of these contracts were handed out while the member for Kitchener–Waterloo was Minister of Health and two while the former member for Parry Sound–Muskoka was Minister of Health.

I do apologize for the mistake and appreciate the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for helping me to clarify that both Conservative Ministers of Health were equally involved with regard to hospital—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable members that, yes, it is a point of order to correct the record, but not to engage in additional debate in the course of correcting one's record.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to introduce Imran Chaudry, chairman, and Georgina Bencsik, adviser. Both are from the Benazir Bhutto Shaheed International Foundation and People's Human Rights Wing Canada and are seated in the members' east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today, with my assistant Maggie Head, Mr. Ron Flemons. Ron is a defensive end with the Toronto Argonauts. Welcome to Queen's Park today, Ron.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INGERSOLL PIPE BAND

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of the

Ingersoll Pipe Band. Recognized by many as Canada's oldest and largest independent pipe band, they have been a mainstay in Ingersoll since 1910.

The band was formed by brothers James and Jack Little, William Collins and Tom Johnston, who became the first pipe major. Under the leadership of Pipe Major Johnston, the band recruited talented drummers and players of the great highland bagpipe and began to cement their place in Canadian history.

With the beginning of the First World War, virtually the entire band joined the 168th Battalion and served overseas. However, Johnston kept the band going when the veteran members returned from war.

Since then, the Ingersoll Pipe Band has had hundreds of members and has played in countless parades, competitions and festivals all over Canada and the United States. In addition, the band has toured Taiwan on three different occasions.

While every small town has activities, clubs and traditions which keep citizens involved and connected to one another, the pipe band is a unique group. The band can often include all members of the family. As a result, the band has helped build strong family and community ties that go beyond music.

I wish the Ingersoll Pipe Band nothing but continued success and hope that the great people of Ingersoll will be able to hear the Bonnie Lass of Bon Accord, the band's signature tune, for many years to come.

FOSTER FAMILIES

Mr. Rick Johnson: I am honoured to rise in the House today to further recognize an outstanding citizen of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Just two weeks ago, Linda Barkey was honoured by the Kawartha–Haliburton Children's Aid Society with the Foster Parent of the Year award.

Many of us know that parenting is a big responsibility. Linda would tell you that foster parenting is not much different. Like any child, foster kids require warmth, acceptance, consistency, structure and guidance, and like any parent, Linda's rewards are immeasurable.

There are a lot of Linda Barkeys out there, people who provide stable and caring homes that encourage positive growth and development; people who counsel, drive, mentor and otherwise support our most vulnerable kids; people like Mary Benjamin, Kim and Carl Teeple, Lynda and John Amting, Marsha and Al Rennie, Karen Suggitt, Dan Gilbert, Pam Williams and Abby Ross, all recently honoured by the Kawartha–Haliburton Children's Aid Society.

Like these people, our government is committed to seeing that these kids have every opportunity to reach their potential. Over the last five years, we have done a lot to improve Ontario's child protection system. Fewer kids are coming into care, more kids are getting the chance to succeed in permanent homes, funding to children's aid societies has increased, and we continue working with our children's aid societies to ensure that those funds are spent on supporting better outcomes for kids.

I'm honoured to extend my appreciation to the volunteers and staff of the Kawartha-Haliburton Children's Aid Society, and my special congratulations to Linda Barkey.

MEMBER FOR KITCHENER-WATERLOO

Mr. Ted Arnott: All of us in this House would hope that our efforts make a positive difference in the lives of Ontarians, but one of our colleagues is literally a life-saver. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo was recently honoured by the Isaac Foundation. Elizabeth Witmer was given their Lifetime Impact Award for her outstanding and successful advocacy on behalf of Isaac McFadyen.

Isaac, a little boy from Campbellford, is afflicted by a rare and life-threatening disease called MPS VI. Upon learning of the almost hopeless prognosis, Isaac's parents discovered that a treatment exists, but the province was unwilling to cover its cost. Expensive in the extreme, it would be unaffordable for the vast majority of Ontario families.

When Elizabeth Witmer heard and learned of the McFadyen family's plight and the fact that the provincial government was unwilling to fund the life-saving treatment, she went to work. She brought the issue into this House and convinced the government to pay for the treatment Isaac needed.

In thanking Elizabeth, Isaac's father, Andrew McFadyen, said:

"Elizabeth Witmer was there for us when no one else was and our son is here today because of her tenacious work, her kind and caring nature, and steadfast refusal to accept no for an answer from our government.

"She worked tirelessly for our son, and I argue, he is here today because of her steadfast efforts," he added.

Thanks to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, the McFadyen family have hope for Isaac's health and future. Elizabeth Witmer has restored their faith in the Legislature and the political process itself.

NAVAL CLUB OF TORONTO

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to salute the men and women of the Naval Club of Toronto. It is an old and venerable institution which many people will know was formally on Hayden Street, near the corner of Bloor and Yonge. It was decommissioned a few years ago and sold for condo redevelopment, which is still going to take place on that corner, I'm sure, one day.

When it was decommissioned, they had a plan to move to Danforth Avenue, which was going to be some three doors away from my constituency office. We were very excited about the prospect of the Naval Club moving there. But as you will remember, Mr. Speaker, there was an implosion of a building on Danforth one day during the construction, and the people who lived upstairs escaped with their very lives. That was to have been the Naval Club. It remains to this time a hole in the ground. It had to be taken down.

But the veterans of the navy were resilient people and they went out and purchased another property at 1910 Gerrard Street. It was formerly a restaurant. There was a recommissioning this past weekend. I was privileged to be one of the speakers, along with Senator Art Eggleton, to open it. It is absolutely beautiful, it is shipshape and it has all of the memorabilia from the former club.

Many thanks to the president, Alan Simpson, and congratulations to everyone for choosing Beaches-East York as the site of the new Naval Club of Toronto.

ST. CLAIR WEST SERVICES FOR SENIORS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House to speak about St. Clair West Services for Seniors, an essential organization in my riding of York South-Weston that offers quality services and programs for our seniors.

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Thanks to a recent provincial investment, St. Clair West Services for Seniors will now be able to expand these important programs by becoming one of 13 new elderly persons' centres in Ontario, bringing the total to 273 across the province. These centres serve as vital community hubs helping seniors stay active, healthy and involved in their communities.

Many elderly persons' centres also have a strong ethnocultural component. For example, several centres in Toronto serve distinct cultural communities such as Russian, Italian, Portuguese and Chinese. In a riding such as York South-Weston, home to a significant population of seniors with diverse backgrounds, this is a very significant component.

This investment will benefit the community of York South-Weston tremendously and I look forward to seeing St. Clair West Services for Seniors continuing to play a vital role in providing access to quality programming for our seniors.

LITERACY FUNDING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to bring to the floor today in my statement some information about the community-based literacy groups across our province. Right now, I'm chairing the estimates committee, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is at estimates. I've been contacted by some of these community-based groups in the province. Just two years ago, we fought hard to get increases in funding, after about a 12-year freeze on funding to most of the community-based groups in the province.

Now they are coming forward and telling me that they've been told by staff at the ministry and they've been told by their boards of directors etc. that they'll have to roll back next year, starting in 2011, to 2008 levels of literacy funding. This is going to have a dramatic effect or impact on the operations; basically, many of them will have to close their doors if their funding is rolled back.

I wanted to put that on the record today in the Legislature as part of a statement because I want to bring it up again next week to the minister during estimates. I think that we forget how important these community-based groups are—the very people who teach basic reading and writing skills to those people who have missed out over their lives.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this today and I look forward to speaking to the minister this week.

KARATE PROGRAM

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Last Saturday I was invited to participate at an awards recognition ceremony in the Sri Guru Nanak Sikh Centre for their annual karate award reception. I had the honour of presenting awards to athletes who have excelled in this great sport.

Hundreds of young people train at this facility and are hosted by the Goju Do Karate Club. These athletes spend countless hours perfecting their art. This past summer, seven members from the centre were selected to participate at the Ontario Summer Games, which were held in Sudbury. These athletes won six medals. That's a great accomplishment.

The karate program at the Sri Guru Nanak Sikh Centre is run by the community itself. Not only are the youth provided with karate guidance; they are provided with proper nutritional education. We all recognize how important it is for our youth to be active, and it is refreshing that a community-based program such as this is available in my riding.

Once again, I would like to congratulate all the athletes, coaches and organizers for their hard work, and I wish them all great success in the years to come.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce an important health care initiative by the Ontario Association of Optometrists. The Ontario Association of Optometrists, whose assistant executive director, Melissa Secord, is with us today—stand up—has launched four pilot programs called Eye See, Eye Learn in Halton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Peel and Windsor-Essex regions.

Junior kindergarten children are encouraged to take an OHIP-insured eye exam, and if required, they get a free pair of eyeglasses. The OAO is working alongside local school boards, public health units and other community stakeholders to reach out to 25,000 children on this important initiative.

As many as one in six children have a vision problem. Annual eye exams become an integral part of the regular health checkups that each child receives as a part of their overall health program.

October is Eye Health Month in Canada, and I'm pleased to recognize the work that our eye doctors are doing in providing access to timely, high-quality health care for the people of this province.

On behalf of the Ontario government, I would like to commend the Ontario Association of Optometrists and its members for helping our children to see their world better and, in particular, to see Ontario better.

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION'S RECORD

Mr. Dave Levac: Just in time for Halloween, when ghost stories are told, and the children tell of ghouls and the goblins, the member from Simcoe-Grey is trying to raise the failed policies of Mike Harris from the grave.

Last night, the member from Simcoe-Grey reminded a room of Conservative members, "I served as your first Minister of Health under Mike Harris [and] went on to serve as Minister of Energy, Science and Technology.... And I would like to get back to cabinet because it's been seven years in opposition, and I'll tell you, it's not much fun."

It's disappointing to learn that the member opposite doesn't see the value in serving his constituents and complains about not having enough fun.

But what's more interesting is the opposition's fixation on Mike Harris and the failed health and energy policies that left Ontario behind and in the dark. They slashed front-line health, closing 28 hospitals, and fired over 6,200 nurses. The list goes on and on.

While the opposition daydreams about Mike Harris and the fun they claim they're not having, Ontario families are served by the McGuinty government.

Boo.

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If I might ask, I wonder if the member could tell us whose accent he was attempting to bring into the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order.

I would just say to all members: I think it's one thing if we're going to, in a light-hearted way, maybe disguise our voices to a degree on something that all members of the House will not take offence to, but I sensed from the opposition side that there were some members who were not pleased with that. I would just remind all members that anything that we can do that causes disorder in the House is offensive to all of us.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on agencies, boards and commissions, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, I'm tabling today our report on the agency review of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

Our recommendations seek to improve the operations of the tribunal. I would also note that separate dissenting opinions have been appended to the report by the official opposition and the third party.

I would like to thank the chair, executive director and other staff of the Human Rights Tribunal for their assistance. I also wish to express our appreciation to those who made submissions to the committee, whether during our public hearings or in writing.

I thank the committee members for their contribution to the review process, as well as our legislative staff; our former clerk, Douglas Arnott; and our research officer, James Charlton.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE NÉERLANDAIS

Mrs. Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month / Projet de loi 124, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine néerlandais.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Ontario is home today to about 500,000 Dutch-Canadians; in fact, we have at least four of us who serve in this Legislature. They've made significant contributions to our province since the 1800s.

I've selected May because on May 5, 1945, the Canadian Forces were instrumental in the liberation of the Netherlands from occupation, and that's when the Dutch celebrate their liberation day and, of course, they honour the heroic efforts of our forces.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I obviously support this petition and affix my name to it and give it to page Bridget.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition extends support for the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to affix my signature and send it with Nicholas to the table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition regarding provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I am pleased to present and support this petition. I affix my name to it and give it to page Ffion.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making positron emission tomography, PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury

Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Bridget.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great number of people from Tillsonburg, who are signing this petition in support of Community Living Tillsonburg and the residents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I affix my signature as I agree with all these people in Tillsonburg who signed this petition.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services

to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I couldn't agree more, and I'm going to give it to Jayden to be delivered to the table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: I continue to receive literally hundreds of these petitions daily. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park ... on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature. As you know, Speaker, this resolution will be debated in the Legislature on November 18.

1330

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page—you'll have to help me—

Interjection: Haadiyah.

M^{me} France G  linas: Haadiyah.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner, Tottenham and Elmville:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians.”

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by good folks mostly of Ingersoll, I believe, and it is to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas members of the Ontario Genealogical Society are concerned about protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries in their original locations; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO AWARD FOR PARAMEDIC BRAVERY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE PRIX DE BRAVOURE DES AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs. Van Bommel moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery / Projet de loi 115, Loi prévoyant le Prix de bravoure des auxiliaires médicaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Applause.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the second reading of Bill 115, the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery Act, 2010, which I introduced earlier this month.

Before I go further, I would like to recognize the work of Wayne and Clara Patterson of Kerwood, Ontario, in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who have been with me every step of the way since we first introduced it as Bill 136 in December 2008.

From the bill's inception back in 2007 to today, the Patterson family has been at the forefront of promoting the need to recognize the role of paramedics in today's emergency response and management.

My bill originated from a number of meetings that I had with Wayne and Clara. The Pattersons' son, Paul, was a paramedic employed by Sun Parlour Emergency Services who was killed on February 25, 2007, while responding to a motor vehicle collision. Through Mr. and Mrs. Patterson's strength and encouragement, this bill was created to recognize our province's paramedics, who, by the very nature of their profession, often go above and beyond the call of duty to rescue and care for a fellow citizen, without giving consideration for their own safety.

February 25, 2007, was a stormy winter day in Chatham-Kent. The paramedics at Sun Parlour Emergency Services were busy responding to multiple emergency calls. Paul Patterson was attending an emergency medical call with two of his colleagues when another call was dispatched by the ambulance communications. The call involved a motor vehicle collision, and Paul was ready to respond with his emergency response unit. En route to the call, Paul's emergency response vehicle left the icy, snow-covered road. Paul was killed in the line of duty while serving the residents of Chatham-Kent and, by extension, the citizens of Ontario.

This was not the first incident in which Paul acted selflessly. Wayne and Clara Patterson supplied me with a combination of news articles, letters of appreciation and award certificates. Paul received the Above and Beyond Award from Sun Parlour Emergency Services in 2005 after being involved in an attempt to save a farmer who had rolled his tractor and pesticide sprayer into a farm pond. Paul, along with a number of others, dove into the pond that had been contaminated by the pesticide sprayer. As the son of a farmer, Paul understood only too well the potential danger of the exposure to pesticides, but he went in anyway. Unfortunately, despite all their efforts, they were unable to save the farmer.

1340

Another individual that I would like to recognize is Bruce Krauter of Sun Parlour Emergency Services.

Bruce's involvement was invaluable during the research leading up to today's second reading of the bill.

Bruce is the operations manager of Sun Parlour Emergency Services, and, together with the Pattersons, was instrumental in assisting me to bring the importance of the paramedic profession to the attention of the Legislature and, more importantly, to the need for provincial and national recognition of the selfless acts of service that so many paramedics provide in exceptionally dangerous circumstances.

Back in May 2007, Mr. Krauter wrote a letter to the members for Essex and Chatham-Kent, Bruce Crozier and Pat Hoy, inquiring as to why there was not a provincial award for paramedic bravery. In his letter, Mr. Krauter wrote, "Paramedics in our community serve the citizens of these communities as well as persons from across this province and visitors from abroad during any condition, time of day, harmful situation, landscape or duration."

These paramedics are put at risk every day, whether it's environmental, biological, acts of violence or while in transit to a call. In Bruce's nearly 30 years of service, he has known two paramedics who have died in the line of duty, and knows numerous others who have performed their duties above and beyond the call or put themselves at risk, all in an act to save someone's life.

Bruce wrote about the N.H. McNally Award, which recognizes acts of bravery by pre-hospital professionals in the performance of their duties. The award has a rich history of honouring individuals who risk their lives to rescue and protect others from harm. The N.H. McNally Award is presented by emergency service peers but is not recognized either provincially or nationally.

An Ontario award for paramedic bravery is necessary in order to provide paramedics in our province the recognition they deserve.

A paramedic in my riding, Tony Metayer, shared with me procedures and medications he dispenses on the scene and en route to the Sydenham District Hospital in Wallaceburg, in the southwest corner of my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Paramedics can do everything from defibrillation to intravenous fluid therapy and advanced airway management. They can administer seven drugs to treat conditions such as chest pain, hypoglycemia, allergic reactions, breathing difficulties, and severe nausea and vomiting. Depending on the circumstances, they have the ability to call for an air ambulance to respond at a scene where the traditional land ambulance will not provide the critical response time needed for the situation. Considering the wide range of patients that paramedics can see in a day, their skills as primary care providers have been very beneficial to the patients they treat. Over the more than 15 years that Tony has worked as a paramedic, he has seen the scope of practice for paramedics evolve significantly.

The role of paramedics is to respond to emergencies, provide medical services and transport patients to medical facilities. In many cases, the initial emergency care provided by paramedics will be the deciding factor

between life and death, temporary or permanent disability, a brief hospital stay or prolonged hospitalization. When responding to emergencies, paramedics may not always be given prior knowledge of the extent of the physical environment and issues that they will be exposed to. In a critical situation, paramedics often experience unexpected and shocking events for which most people would not be prepared. Paramedics are very often required to deliver their services in unregulated, uncontrolled, unpredictable and often hazardous environmental situations.

While identified with the health care community due to the medical scope of their practice, paramedics often serve alongside police and firefighters in attending to and dealing with emergency situations and settings. They must be prepared to respond to unfolding emergency settings beyond the medical situations to which they are initially responding. Examples of calls to which paramedics would attend include working fires, assaults, car accidents, drug overdoses and alcohol abuse, just to mention a few.

In Canada, it is estimated that one paramedic a year dies in the line of duty, with 18 losing their lives between 1995 and 2006.

A limited amount of data is available to assist in highlighting the dangers and injury risks to paramedics. However, an American study of occupational fatalities in emergency medical services identified a fatality rate for paramedics that exceeds that of the general population and is similar to that of other emergency public service workers, including police officers and firefighters.

The reality is that when an emergency arises, there is an expectation from the public that firefighters, police officers and paramedics will be there when they are needed most.

It is important that this bill be passed, because paramedics in the province of Ontario deserve praise and admiration when they go above and beyond their duties, protecting those citizens in need of emergency care. An Ontario award for paramedic bravery would provide that necessary recognition.

It has been 2000 years since the good Samaritan stopped and tended to an injured stranger at the roadside. The Bible did not record the name of the helper or his or her act of compassion, but we know that this is a symbol for all of us who care for another person.

It is my intention that Ontario's current good Samaritans, the nearly 6,000 paramedics across the province, are recognized appropriately for events which compel them to act selflessly to rescue or care for another without giving consideration for their own safety.

I ask all of my colleagues in the House today to give careful consideration to Bill 115, and honour all the paramedics who go well beyond what they need to do and the kinds of risks they take that need to be recognized, especially those who lose their life in the line of duty as they protect all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very happy to rise today to support Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery. The short title is the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery Act, 2010.

I'll read the explanatory note: "The bill creates the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery. The award is to be presented annually to paramedics, such as Paul Patterson of Kerwood, Ontario, who, in the opinion of the selection committee appointed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, have performed an act of exceptional bravery to save or protect the life of another person. An award may recognize an act of bravery that occurred when the paramedic was off duty and may be made posthumously in certain circumstances."

To the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex: I don't imagine that we would have a lot of negative comments about your particular private member's bill. I think it's an excellent idea. You mentioned that there are over 6,000 paramedics in the province. You see these ambulances travelling and, in a lot of cases, helicopters flying 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Accidents and the need for paramedics don't stop at a 9-to-5 job or anything like that.

As you know, we have a number of award ceremonies for police officers in the province of Ontario. I know that the Ontario Provincial Police, in each region, has an awards event, and they bring the families and anyone who's involved in some of these disasters or occurrences that require police, fire and paramedics, and a number of the police officers receive awards. I've been at a number of the ceremonies, and I've seen each year up to 20 or 30 medals of bravery for civilians and OPP officers for particular incidents. I can tell you that in a lot of those cases, there were paramedics available. Paramedics may have also been near the scene of whatever tragedy may or may not have occurred, and quite often, of course, there's not a specific award for those paramedics.

1350

I think they could get included in some of the civilian awards, along with the police officers. However, the idea of a specific award is a good idea. I think there can easily be a nomination process put in place that would be a benefit to our paramedics.

I think the intent of this is also good for morale in the health care field for our paramedics. The paramedics I know across the province, particularly the ladies and gentlemen who are members of the County of Simcoe Paramedic Services and serve Barrie, Orillia and all of Simcoe county, every time I meet any of them, they are very professional. They're people who want to learn. They're continually updating themselves through courses and improving themselves, and they're very, very committed.

There are a number of paramedics also—it's interesting—who have gone back to school and become registered nurses, and some have gone on to become doctors as well. I think that shows you the commitment paramedics have.

I would hope that every member of the House and the government would listen. I think this is something that's

fairly easy for the government to adopt. They don't even have to adopt Ms. Van Bommel's bill; they can make it part of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and make it one of the awards that we present in some of our awards ceremonies here at Queen's Park or regionally in some of the areas.

When you look at the life of someone who is a paramedic, I think you'll find that they come across every kind of disaster, whether it's something involved in fire or road accidents etc. They see some of the messiest incidents you can imagine a human being seeing.

In driving, a couple of times, I've actually come across an accident myself, where I've tried to help a paramedic or a couple of paramedics with an accident that was bad, by directing traffic or trying to help them a little bit—with the little bit of knowledge that I have in the business, to provide some assistance.

So I think that if we in this Legislature start to look at private members' bills, this is one that we can't possibly turn down. It's something that we should look at in a very positive manner. It supports more people in our emergency services system, and it certainly is good for their morale and for the fact that Ontarians should pay special attention and appreciation to some of these guys who, again, are putting their lives on the line 365 days a year.

I will be supporting this, and I encourage all members of the House to do so as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Likewise. It's a pleasure and a privilege to stand, and kudos to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for bringing this forward. She is a dignified, unique presence in this House on occasion, and this is one of them.

Certainly we support this in the New Democratic Party, and as my friend from Simcoe North would say, who would oppose it? It's the least we can do, and I would submit perhaps it is the very least we can do, because we need to do so much more. I would ask her, in turn, to perhaps lobby her own cabinet for the passage of a bill that I've tabled not once but twice here, which is to extend presumed diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder for front-line workers—inspired by paramedics.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about what inspired my bill and perhaps her bill, which is the bravery of our paramedics. Certainly our union representatives from CUPE, who represented my own particular paramedics, were here at Queen's Park, not once but twice, to support my bill. And let me explain what the bill said. It said that if you are a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder and a front-line worker, i.e., a paramedic, a police officer or a firefighter, that you, when dealing with the WSIB, should have a presumed diagnosis that your job gave you the post-traumatic stress disorder. Right now, the way it stands is that members who are paramedics have to fight their way through a bureaucratic system and try to prove—which is almost impossible to do—that their post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis

came from their work, when in fact, all firefighters, police officers and paramedics can tell you of course it does.

The push-back is, "Well, it's part of the job to rush into trauma." It is, and they do. We ask them to do what we can't or won't do. But the reality is there is no screening that can tell you who will succumb and who will not succumb. This is in every way analogous to the firefighter legislation that was passed by the government here in this House—inspired by our own leader, Andrea Horwath, and her private member's bill, but then taken up and passed by the government—to say that certain cancers should be presumed to have been caused by the job if you are a firefighter. Certainly firefighters are extremely appreciative of the fact that that has passed into law. Here is an analogous situation completely. Here's a situation where, for example, a police officer or firefighter or paramedic comes down with post-traumatic stress disorder because of their work, couldn't have foreseen that this would happen before it happened, needs the support of WSIB and finds it almost impossible to get that support.

Let me just share with you the stories of two paramedics who came to my office, because this developed out of constituency work. One paramedic came to my office who was the victim of a sexual assault while on the job. She's still not back at work; she still suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. She truly was the inspiration behind the bill. Once inspired by her, I had a meeting with a number of paramedics who told me their own tales of trauma. One paramedic told about going in to rescue a child who was in shock and trying to resuscitate that child and failing, and later being diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder with the usual symptoms: nightmares, inability to work, abuse of drugs or alcohol. These are all the side effects of a diagnosis of PTSD.

Another paramedic talked about how he rushed to a scene on a call, only to be ambushed by a group of young people who beat him senseless. He was, needless to say, a little more hesitant, and again became a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder with all of the signs and symptoms. We can't have this. We cannot ask our front-line workers to do in effect what we ask our military personnel to do without the safety that we extend to our military personnel.

If you are fighting, for example, in Afghanistan and you have a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, we will look after you—maybe not well enough, granted, but we will look after you. We see that as the result of what we asked you to do on behalf of your community. But often for police officers, for firefighters and particularly for paramedics, we ask them to be the first on the scene in what could only be described in a small way as war-like conditions sometimes, yet we don't extend to them what we extend to our military personnel.

It's a bill that I've tabled not once, as I've said before, but twice. Certainly firefighters have spoken to me about this. Certainly police officers have spoken to me about this. They all see this as an issue that concerns them. It

may not be the front-of-the-line issue that they negotiate with the McGuinty government on, but it certainly is an issue that they want addressed.

Again, it happens to very few, thankfully, but it does happen, just as cancers from rushing into a fire happen to very few of our firefighters, thankfully. But it does happen, and when it does happen, that's when we as a community and presumably we as a Legislature and certainly they as a government need to be on the side of those who are afflicted.

To get back to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex's bill, certainly we in the New Democratic Party support this bill; we do. An award for bravery to the brave—that's really a no-brainer. But there's so much more we need to do for our paramedics. A nurse friend of mine describes them as the lowest echelon of the front-line response team in terms of the way they get treated. That's not good. That's not fair. We need to raise them up, and we need to do what they ask us to do when they ask us to recognize that afflictions like post-traumatic stress disorder are a result of their jobs and to treat them accordingly. You can imagine what it looks like not to do that in the life of a paramedic. You can imagine the long lines, the long time it takes to get a diagnosis. It often takes months, sometimes years, and many days off, many days without pay, and sometimes the loss of your job itself. This all comes down to a critical incident or a series of critical incidents that are part of their job.

1400

I'm going to leave a few minutes for my colleague from Beaches-East York to speak about this issue as well. But suffice to say, just in conclusion, absolutely I support this bill. It is a wonderful and necessary bill. I ask in return that members of the House support my bill or lobby their own cabinet across the aisle to bring in a bill, as they did in the case of the firefighters, for presumed diagnosis. I know that many workers at WSIB, even, would like to see such a bill because it makes their job easier in terms of helping paramedics.

To all the paramedics in my riding and across Ontario who do so much and really receive not much—and certainly haven't received this yet, despite years of tabling the bill—I say, yes, let's reward you for your bravery, but let's also look after you when you fall in the line of duty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 110, introduced by our colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Certainly, I am fully in support of this.

In the late 1990s, the former government here in Ontario downloaded land ambulance services to upper-tier municipalities. In my capacity as commissioner of health services for York region, I was charged with amalgamating the six ambulance services that existed in York region into one publicly owned and, I'm proud to say, publicly delivered service. At the time, that was fairly controversial, and I came to know extremely well what was entailed in the work that paramedics actually do.

They certainly, as has been said already, put themselves into emergency situations. They are first responders. By their very nature, emergency situations are full of risk, so they certainly are put at risk every day. Whether these risks are environmental or biological or even when they respond to situations where there may be violence—they accompany the police quite often in emergency situations—they are certainly putting themselves at risk. Although, and certainly I can speak for York region, the type of training the paramedics receive in order to deal with these situations and also the personal protective equipment they receive is, I think, quite excellent, inevitably they put themselves at risk, and often, as we've heard already, show how brave they are in those particular situations.

During the time I was the commissioner of health services, we had a situation where a car left Highway 9 near Newmarket and went into a stormwater detention pond. Our paramedics were the first on the scene. Three of them actually went straight into that stormwater detention pond because the vehicle was sinking and the occupants were inside. They extracted the two occupants successfully. Unfortunately, one did pass away, but the other was saved. Those three paramedics were honoured. In fact, they received the McNally Award of Bravery. They were and are good friends of mine: Ian Phythian, Shawn McLeish and Mark Hinton. At the time, we felt that even though the McNally award is very prestigious—it's only offered, obviously, when there is a particular act of bravery that has occurred. It's not an automatic annual type of award. It is one that is judged to have been earned in particular situations. Even though they did receive the McNally award, we wanted to do something more, so our York Regional Police also honoured these three individuals.

A provincial award makes sense. We have it for the other first responders—police and fire—and paramedics should be considered exactly the same way in terms of first responders.

I was happy to see that in 2009 another York region paramedic, Jamie Luz, received the McNally award. He was on his last shift when he and his partner came across a fire in a nurses' lounge at Scarborough Grace Hospital. They went straight into action, put the fire out and prevented harm to the dozens of patients and staff in the department at the time.

It's long overdue that we have a provincial award for bravery for paramedics. I fully support the member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I certainly would echo the words that have already been said about Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery, and I do want to congratulate the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for bringing the bill forward. I think it is a very important bill, and I think it's certainly the least we can do to honour our hard-working and very brave paramedics in the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased that this bill would create an annual award administered by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immi-

gration that would recognize outstanding acts of bravery performed by our paramedics, whether they are on or off duty.

It appears that everybody will be supporting this excellent bill. I think it's an opportunity for us to recognize annually, and certainly more often, the incredibly important work that is carried out by paramedics throughout the province of Ontario. I think it's also a recognition of the fact that the work they do can often be dangerous. They can find themselves in very risky situations, and certainly there are threats to their own lives as a result of the work they do. Through this bill that the member has put forward, we can demonstrate the support of the public—of all the people in the province of Ontario—for our paramedics.

I understand this bill has been introduced before. Unfortunately, it has never been able to go to committee. I really hope that this time we can send it to committee and deal with any outstanding issues, and that we will see this provincial annual award established in the very near future.

I know there are other awards that are currently administered by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration that do recognize the bravery of some of our other first responders such as our police officers and our firefighters, but of course we don't currently have any award or recognition at the provincial level to recognize the same bravery and the same contributions of our first responders: our paramedics. As the third vital component of public safety services, I do believe very strongly that the work of emergency medical services should be and must be recognized as well.

I think it is important to note that the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario does present the N.H. McNally Award, which was named after the founder of the integrated system of ambulance services in this province, to honour paramedics in the province who have risked their lives to rescue or protect other people from harm. This award is, in fact, administered by an outstanding leader and member of my community, John Prno, the director of emergency medical services for the region of Waterloo. So we have an award. Obviously it's not an official provincial award, but we have already recognized that these paramedics do receive recognition.

Paramedics, I think everybody would agree, play a vitally important role in our lives. I know that the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was inspired to propose the establishment of this award by a young man from her community who tragically lost his life in 2007 while responding to a motor vehicle accident during an ice storm. Paul Wayne Patterson died in the line of duty while serving the residents of Chatham-Kent.

1410

We know that, more recently, four Ottawa paramedics—Craig MacInnes, Patricia St. Denis, Amanda Walkowiak and Virginia Walker—risked their lives to disarm a man wielding a knife and came to the aid of a police officer who had been fatally wounded.

These are just a few of the outstanding examples of bravery that have been demonstrated by our paramedics who go above and beyond the call of duty every day. It's obvious they are deserving of our recognition and this award, and also of our highest respect and sincere appreciation.

I certainly know that, as a former Minister of Health, I would have contact with our paramedics. I was able to see first-hand the work that they did undertake as they provided the timely first aid to so many seriously ill and injured people, and what a crucial role they play each and every day in saving the lives of people in this province.

So I congratulate the member and I thank her for bringing this bill forward. It's my sincere hope that we can pass this bill, that it will become law and that we can start to recognize our paramedics and honour them with this provincial award.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise in support of this bill. I think it's an important bill and I've had an opportunity over the last number of months to speak to paramedics and others who are emergency first responders. They feel kind of left out of the entire process, and they ought not to feel left out, because they are very much a part of what the public has come to expect in terms of service. If there is an automobile accident, if there is a fire, if there is any necessity, of course we expect the police to arrive and of course we expect the firefighters to arrive, but right hot on their tails, and sometimes in advance of them, the paramedics are there as well. They deal with very difficult circumstances. They deal with life-threatening circumstances. Their lives can often, as has been said, be put at risk, and we need to recognize those men and women in the same way that we recognize our firefighters and police.

I draw no lines between them. It is not appropriate to reward one set of people who do an exemplary job on behalf of the public and to leave the other ones out. If we are going to continue—and I believe we need to continue—to recognize firefighters and police officers for the work that they do, for the bravery that they show, for the exemplary service they provide to our community, then we can do no less for the third group.

That is why I'm here to speak to the bill. I commend the member for bringing it forward. There is scant opportunity around here for private members to bring bills forward as it is. You get one every year or year and a half that actually comes forward for debate, and I encourage all members to vote for this bill. But what I also encourage the member to do, as I have done for the last number of bills that have passed in this House—and I'm sure this one will as well—is to lobby your colleagues to have it brought forward into committee and for third reading. I certainly know that in the committee of which I am the Chair, which is regulations and private bills, we have tried, with considerable difficulty, to bring bills forward so that they can be heard. All that is required in that particular committee is that two out of

the three members of the subcommittee, one from each party, have to agree to bring a bill forward. It is very difficult when government members, sitting on that committee and others, continually block the passage of all bills from being heard without the express say-so of the House leader for the government party.

It's time for the members in this place to rise up. It's time for the members in this place to stand up and to say that they want an opportunity to have these good ideas discussed beyond this Legislature. They want them heard in the committee. They want them brought back for third reading and they don't want this to be some kind of academic exercise.

On behalf of the people who would be the recipients of the bravery awards, I'm asking the member to take that next step. Thank you for the idea, but make sure your colleagues will allow it to go forward to committee. Make sure that they will stand up to the government House leader. Make sure that they will have the courage of their own convictions, if they believe this is a good bill, to allow it to go through the committee process, to allow any amendments that need to be made, to hear any deputants who need to be heard. In the end we can pass it as a House, because I'm sure members on all sides of the House will allow this bill to go forward, want it to go forward. We don't need any further roadblocks for things that are good like this, that are going to get unanimous approval and will be appreciated by everyone in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was just reminded of a bill I had about 10 years ago. I introduced a bill recognizing the use of automated external defibrillators. I remember when it was at committee, they even stripped the title off my bill, and they wouldn't even bring it back to the House. I remember the Ontario Medical Association coming to the committee, speaking against the use of these defibrillators, saying, "These don't work. They're very dangerous." As you know now, luckily, we've got them in the province.

Sometimes these new ideas or bills take time and they take a lot of educating. A lot of information has to pass through the hands of members and the general public, because I think we have to get the public onside. This bill here before us is part of that process. In some cases, members have brought bills four or five times, but it's all part of educating and getting people to be better informed.

I think this bill will eventually pass in one form or another. I know that the paramedics in this case are to be recognized. I think the member from Simcoe North made a good suggestion that there might be an opportunity to bring this forward even without a bill.

As you know, we do recognize our incredible frontline officers and firefighters. I just wanted to put in a good word for some of our real-life heroes who are paramedics. Here are a couple of examples.

A very unfortunate example: Back in December 2009, outside Ottawa's Civic hospital, early in the morning, a

couple of paramedics saw a police officer wrestling with a man in a parking lot. The paramedics ran outside. One reportedly grabbed the knife-wielding man from behind and wrestled him into a headlock. A female paramedic grabbed the man's arm and kicked the assailant in the groin, sending him to the ground. The paramedics then pinned the man as a colleague went to the aid of Constable Czapnik, who had been slashed in the throat. As you know, unfortunately, Constable Czapnik, a father of four, died from his wounds later on in Ottawa.

This was above and beyond the call of duty, with the paramedics, who were in the hospital, obviously—they'd just brought a patient in—then running out into the parking lot to help the officer who was being attacked. That's the type of thing we want to, I think, recognize with the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Another very good example I found is a couple of paramedics who were in Brampton. They were also recognized. What happened with them was paramedic Sutherland demonstrated exceptional courage when she witnessed a collision where a van was wedged under a tractor-trailer. When the van burst into flames, trapping the driver, Sheri Sutherland grabbed a fire extinguisher and instructed a bystander to fight the fire. Disregarding her own personal safety and exposing herself to thick, black smoke and fire, she broke the passenger-side window, climbed into the burning vehicle and removed the unconscious person. There's another example of a paramedic going above and beyond the call of duty. That's Sheri Sutherland, who has received the McNally award from Brampton, along with her colleagues in Brampton.

Anyway, this is a bill that I think, again, will come to fruition. But I think it's upon all of us to try and work and make this a reality. That's why we've got to support the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex in this good work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to address the House on the bill before us, Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery.

The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has done her homework. I want to make sure the House realizes that she has received letters of support from EMS, the police, fire services and individuals all across the province of Ontario. I compliment her on doing that homework and receiving some information that shows that the communities at large, those who are the first responders' group—that's what the group's called, the first responders. The paramedics are part and parcel of that first responders' group. Collectively, we have made advancements in equipment, we've made advancements in standards and best practices, but it's the people, the paramedics, whom she is talking about.

1420

I've worked locally with our paramedics. I've done the ride-alongs. I've spoken to our base commanders and the individuals and watched them work. I can tell you

that the Brant ambulance service that takes care of Brantford and Brant county—and they have an agreement in Paris, Ontario. They also have an agreement with Six Nations to go back and forth. They've got 65 primary and advanced care paramedics to support. That's one of the 6,000 groups of people the member's talking about. They cover 924 square kilometres in response time, and they've got 116,000 citizens that they take care of. They've got five ambulances and one emergency response unit on daytime hours; 14,700 calls for assistance in 2005. From 1996 to 2005 they saw an increase in services of 80%. That tells you how hard they work, but what they don't tell you is that it's about the families of these heroes as well. Yes, their families know that they're going to work every day and that they could lose their lives providing that service, just as any other of our first responders do.

So we're asking for support. They've asked for our support to support their own. That's another important aspect, because it speaks highly of how they care about their colleagues. They are not always successful. They carry that with them, along with the families who are in grief. So they carry those spots on their hearts of the people they can't save. They're doing us another favour that doesn't often get talked about.

The bill talks to us; it speaks loud and clear to us that it's another way in which we, as legislators, can move forward and continue to honour those who put it on the line for us. I believe that the member's intent is simply that. That's all it is. It's not anything else compounded. It's not anything political. It's not to do anything else than to honour those people she's told us about.

We have in each of our ridings stories that could be shared by the paramedics of the things they've had to see and the things they've done. The fact is, they don't want to be heroes. That's another misconception. They didn't take the job thinking, "Some day I'm going to be a hero." They put themselves behind all of that.

What we want to do is to elevate that so that we honour them, their service, the service itself and their families. What's important to point out here is that their families, every single day when their loved one goes to work, carry that burden as well. If we can do one small thing to honour them, then I say let's go for it. I support this bill wholeheartedly, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, want to rise and speak in favour of this bill, and thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Ms. Van Bommel, for presenting it.

Having spent 25 years in the fire service, I want to say that when I went to the accidents and the places where these types of acts would take place, there was no distinction, whether you were a policeman, a firefighter or a medical attendant, as to what you had to do. So I would commend her for doing that and point out my support for this piece of legislation.

I gather by that, Mr. Speaker, that my time's gone. In fact, according to the clock, there never was any time, but thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I think you had about 40 seconds, but thank you.

Mrs. Van Bommel has up to two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I would like to thank the members from Simcoe North, Parkdale–High Park, Oak Ridges–Markham, Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York, Eglinton–Lawrence, Brant and Oxford, even for the quick moment that he spoke, for their very supportive words.

Since first introducing this bill in 2009, I have received numerous letters, emails and phone calls of support, as the member from Brant noted, and I would like to thank those groups and individuals for their support of this bill.

Paul Patterson paid the ultimate sacrifice. He was a hero, but first and foremost, he was a paramedic. On behalf of Paul Patterson and countless other paramedics, including Bruce Krauter, Tony Metayer and my own nephew Jeff Millar, who is a paramedic in the Renfrew area, I urge all members of the House to join me in support of this bill and honour these courageous people.

Before I finish, I would like to read the prayer of the Association of Municipal Emergency Medical Services of Ontario. The prayer goes:

“God grant me the strength to deliver emergency medical care with skilful hands and a compassionate heart. Give me the courage and ability to render my professional skills when called upon and lives are on the line. Help to guide these hands with love and care as I bring new life into this world. Let me ease the suffering of others from day to day.

“And finally, to help me accept my fate and the fate of others with a clear mind and an open heart.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. For those visitors in the gallery today and those watching at home, we will vote on Mrs. Van Bommel's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE AGAINST PICKETING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES GENS VULNÉRABLES CONTRE LE PIQUETAGE

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to prevent picketing of supported group living residences / Projet de loi 83, Loi visant à empêcher le piquetage devant les résidences de groupe avec services de soutien.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased today to speak on Bill 83, an issue that I feel strongly about, and I know, from

speaking to a number of members in this House, that I share that view with many others.

I first want to take the opportunity to thank some of the many organizations and individuals for their support for this bill: from Community Living Ontario, executive Keith Powell, Rozalyn Werner-Arce and Gordon Kyle, who actually gave me the idea in the first place; from the People First organization, Kory Earle; and from the Respect our Homes Coalition, Melissa Abrams and Kim Gavan—those three individuals did an incredible job this morning at their press conference, and I thank you for that.

I also need to thank the many organizations that came down to Queen's Park today to support this bill. I'm going to go fairly quickly, because there is quite a list: Community Living Ontario, Community Living Quinte West, Community Living Kawartha Lakes, Community Living Walkerton and District, Community Living Chatham-Kent, Community Living London, Community Living Campbellford/Brighton, Community Living Prince Edward County, Community Living Durham North, Community Living Tillsonburg, Community Living Welland Pelham, Community Living North Halton and Community Living Brampton Caledon.

I also want to thank the individuals and organizations from all over Ontario who sent me letters of support and I know have had conversations with their own MPPs to educate them on the importance of this bill.

During the summer of 2007, a strike was happening across southwestern Ontario. That summer, staff working at seven supported living agencies were part of a labour dispute that continued for nine weeks. During this time, homes for individuals with intellectual disabilities were picketed by workers. Supported individuals felt trapped inside their homes, and some were forced to leave altogether. Many residential neighbourhoods were disrupted by picket lines, porta-potties, megaphones and whistles, 24 hours a day. Shouting occurred at all hours of the day and night, disturbing the neighbourhoods and scaring the residents.

Community Living and other organizations that support individuals with intellectual disabilities have worked very hard to incorporate supported living residents into our neighbourhoods. Gone are the days of institutions for those with intellectual disabilities. As a society, we understand that it's important for us to live together in our homes in a community close to family and friends.

Neighbourhoods should not have to fear that having a supportive living residence in their neighbourhood will mean, during times of labour unrest, that they will be subjected to porta-potties occupying their streets, picket lines obstructing traffic, and noise at all hours of the day and night.

Imagine this from the perspective of someone with an intellectual disability. You live in a supported living residence with your friends. You have a part-time job, and a family that comes often to visit. You enjoy the company of your support workers and have a wonderful relationship with them. They help take you to work, on day trips and play games with you at the end of the day.

1430

What happens when, the next morning, you wake up and these same people that you trust are outside of your home with picket signs, shouting into megaphones? And when the strike is over, everyone is expected to go back to normal; they're your friend again. But it's not that easy. This is their home, and they did not feel safe or secure in their home, and it was a violation of their human rights.

The book *Behind Closed Curtains*, which is a record of experiences from individuals whose homes were picketed in Ontario in 2007, has many quotes describing first-hand the feelings and emotions during the nine-week strike. Some quotes were:

"Picketing centred us out. Everyone now knows where we live. We are supposed to be fitting in. I ask you: How is this helpful? What about our confidentiality?"

"It's hard to discuss my feelings of what it feels like to cancel your life."

"I had to move."

"I was trapped in my own home."

During the summer of 2008, I had the opportunity to travel the province with the Standing Committee on Social Policy for Bill 77, the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act. It was actually my first bill as critic for community and social services. The strikes of 2007 were still very fresh in the minds of Community Living organizations across the province, and they came to the committee with suggestions on how to make this legislation stronger. The one thing that was clear throughout committee depositions was that these organizations did not want to see the actions taken in 2007 to be repeated if there were going to be future labour disruptions.

A representative from Community Living Tillsonburg said during the committee hearings, "The rightful entitlement to enjoy the peace, tranquility and security of their homes, as deserved by any Ontarian, was taken away. Their relationships with their neighbours were affected significantly. We believe that no other citizens in Ontario are subject to having strikes occur at their home, whether they are owners or tenants. People who are supported by Community Living need to have their rights respected as well."

As I mentioned earlier, since this bill was introduced I've received widespread support from individuals and organizations across the province. I want to share with you some letters that I've received. From Larry Leonard, who's the president of Community Living Durham North: "We are not calling into question labour's right to strike, or its right to lawfully picket our administration building, or other public buildings. But we cannot accept that vulnerable people should be subjected to aggressive picketing, in their homes, by their own support staff."

From David Spencer at Community Living Manitoulin: "You would not want striking workers picketing in front of your house, so please demonstrate the same respect to people with intellectual disabilities and support Bill 83."

From Kira, a support worker in the central west region: "To the member of Northumberland-Quinte

West, I support Bill 83. Individuals that live in supported homes deserve to live in peace and quiet, without the threat of picketing in their front yards. Imagine the impression that this practice makes on the neighbours and businesses in the neighbourhood."

I think Mary Munnoch, the president of the Community Living Association for South Simcoe, put it very well when she said, "If the picketing of group homes continues to be allowed, it may very well set back much of the work done by agencies, parents, community advocates and the government itself that was intended to meaningfully integrate people with disabilities into our communities. The 'not in my backyard' mentality is still visible in many communities."

From Bob Butella, Community Living Guelph Wellington: "If they were taken out of their home for a medical appointment or another activity, they were often harassed by striking workers—despite having established picket line protocols that were put in place to prevent these actions. This is an unfortunate and preventable event that, in effect, undermined years of community building by these agencies. Vulnerable persons deserve better!"

From Rick Tutt, Community Living, Lanark: "This issue is not about the right to strike ... it is about a person's right to enjoy his or her home and not to be subject to the disruption of picketers demonstrating in front of their home and causing undue disruption and pain."

From Sheryl Chandler, Community Living Dufferin: "How can we say on one hand your worker must respect you and on the other allow workers to strike in front of people's homes, dictating to them when they can leave the property? Does that make sense? You would think that picketing in front of someone's home would simply be against the law."

I want to read to you an email I received after the introduction of this bill. They've asked that their names be held in confidence, but it is from Kimberley, a support worker and her friend.

"JT is nearing 65 and has had a life that many others would not have survived, starting at the age of five, when she was institutionalized for about 30 to 35 years. Her family has all since passed, and she is alone. The only people in her life are paid to be there. I once was one of those people, approximately 15 years ago, and am now proud to be able to call JT my friend.

"Each day, JT struggles to feel safe in the world; it's complicated and not overly welcoming to her. She is confused often by the rhythms of her day and the expectations of others that she has little control over. She relies on her staff for almost everything: all her meals, her meds, to keep those around her from hurting her, to protect her from the world on the other side of her front door, for her health and the place in the world. I believe JT's support staff care deeply for her and have a sense of obligation to her. But I also know that her needs will also come second to theirs when push comes to shove. I am troubled by the fact that her right to a peaceful home

currently comes after the staff's right to picket and go on strike.

"JT is a tiny, 65-year-old woman with frail health ... who has lived a life of abuse, neglect [and] profound loneliness, and whose rights have always come after others'. She needs us to recognize that and to say no. JT needs us to say no so that she can hold on to the only thing in her life that she can trust—that her staff are people trying to create a place where she can feel safe. JT has little to nothing in her life like that—the view from her front window needs to be protected from a battle on her driveway between the people that she believes are there to keep her safe. We promised her that—we promised her deceased parents that they could trust us—that she should move into [the] community and she would be safe. Our government promised her that" too.

I think Kimberley said this very well.

I want to encourage everyone to visit a website called www.respectourhomes.ca. If you need a compelling argument as to why you should support this bill, the website by the Respect Our Homes Coalition lays it out admirably. In one instance, a picketer tried to provoke a resident into having a seizure by flashing a red laser into their room. This disturbing act was caught on video and can be seen on the site. The video describes one picketer trying to lure residents out with a box of chocolates.

I could go on and on, but the bottom line is, we have an opportunity with Bill 83 to say, "You have the right to strike; just don't do it in front of people's homes, in front of supportive living residents." I urge people to actually take the high road. Think about what we're trying to do when we use words like "inclusion" and talk about how we want to shut down institutions. We've done that, but you also have to protect people when they're in the community.

I hope that we can set the partisanship aside for a few hours this afternoon and actually get this to committee.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just have to remind visitors in the gallery that we have a very strict rule. We are really happy you're at Queen's Park today, but you're not allowed to participate in the debate, and that includes clapping. But welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I really do want to congratulate the member from Dufferin-Caledon for bringing this bill forward and for the passionate presentation that she made. I hope that people have paid very close attention to the comments she made and the passion with which she presented those arguments. I hope that, at the end of the day, they will support her in this endeavour and vote for Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, 2010.

It's wonderful to see so many people here today, and again, I think it speaks to the fact that this bill is important to many people throughout the province of Ontario.

1440

I also want to thank the member for her ongoing, steadfast commitment to promoting and advancing the

rights of all intellectually disabled individuals. They are our citizens, and I would say to you that this member repeatedly, time and time again, has done her very best to ensure the well-being of many vulnerable citizens in the province of Ontario.

We all know that, for a very long time, intellectually disabled adults were forced to live in large group homes, away from their families and their communities. Now, we have made progress. We have rectified that situation. Through the very good work of Community Living Ontario, these same people now have the opportunity that we do to live within their own homes, with their loved ones and within their communities.

I believe it's critical that, as a society, we provide these people with the means to live with dignity. I can tell you that that's what Community Living Ontario is working hard to achieve every day. Unfortunately, we've heard from the member and we know ourselves that these people have found themselves caught in the middle of labour disputes, and as a result, they have been put at risk by picketing and striking workers during times of labour unrest. We've heard some very shocking stories and I think we need to remember them.

We need to also remember that if we're going to be picketing, let's do it in front of the management offices and let's not do it in front of the people whom we're supposed to be tasked with looking after and caring for.

We've heard stories about strikers barring people's way in and out of their homes. Think of what you would feel like if that happened to you. We've heard of picketers shouting instructions on bullhorns, blowing whistles and screaming "Scab." I can't imagine somebody doing it outside my own home. We've heard of portable toilets being installed on their front lawns. We've heard of lasers and flashing lights being shone into group homes to induce seizures. We've heard of fights. There are some other stories that we have heard.

It is simply not fair to target these individuals and to use them as pawns in the negotiating process. Collective bargaining ought to remain between management and the unions. We should not be using these people, harassing them and intimidating them. This is abhorrent behaviour, and I think all of us in the province of Ontario have a responsibility to make sure that it does not happen. As I just said before, we wouldn't want it happening outside of our own homes.

I believe that unions have the right to peacefully protest and picket during contract negotiations. However, I don't believe that they should be allowed to torment these citizens in their own homes. Supported independent living is a healthy and inclusive way for individuals to live within and contribute to their communities.

I congratulate the member for Dufferin-Caledon for bringing forward this bill, and I believe very strongly that everyone should support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It is with great pleasure today that I rise to support Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable

People Against Picketing Act, presented for debate here today by the member from Dufferin–Caledon, who introduced this bill. It's important to speak to such an important issue. I've been speaking about this a number of times as I visit Community Living residences in my riding.

This bill addresses the problem that happened during the summer of 2007 in many places in southwestern Ontario, including my riding. At the time, the staff working at a number of supported community living residences were part of a labour dispute that went on for over two months. During the strike, a number of homes for individuals with intellectual disabilities were picketed by workers.

I want to point out that those are their private homes. It's not an institution; it's a private home. Services come in to help them and meet the needs of their day, but it's their home.

For residents and their families, some of the picketing was frightening and disruptive and left them feeling trapped. It took away their right to enjoy the peace and security of their homes.

It was a tough situation for everyone. It was difficult for the residents and their families, but also tough for the support workers.

I've been to Community Livings often and have seen the good work that the staff does. I also visited during the strike in 2007. I spoke with the staff members and the residents, and I know this was not the situation that either group wanted. The staff were not happy being there, and of course, as we all have heard from the member presenting the bill, the residents were very concerned about what was happening outside their homes.

People with intellectual disabilities who are supported by Community Living need to have their rights respected, and that is what this bill does. The bill prohibits the picketing of supported group living residences where people with developmental disabilities live. It ensures that during labour disputes, people participating in supported living will have their comfort and safety protected in their homes, and I think that's very important.

When the government passed Bill 77, the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, in 2008, it did not prohibit picketing at the homes, despite calls for an amendment by supported living representatives.

Bill 83 fills a loophole that still exists in the supportive care system and protects Ontarians involved in supportive living from a repeat of what happened in 2007.

One of the supported living residences where this unfortunate situation happened was Community Living Tillsonburg, in my riding of Oxford. With us at Queen's Park today, we have representatives from Community Living Tillsonburg, including Marty Graf, the executive director; Lisa Francke; Sandra Bray; and some good friends of mine, Dave and Carolyn Streefkerk. I want to thank them, and all the others who came from Community Living Tillsonburg, for being here today. I commend them all for their commitment to helping people in need and for working to make Ontario a better place for all to live.

I think that's what's very important about this: that it's for all people. These are special residences for people who have special needs—but they are people and it's their home, just like everyone else's.

Community Living Tillsonburg is a non-profit organization that works with people with intellectual disabilities. Founded in 1955, the centre has gone from a school for developmentally disabled children to a full-fledged Community Living establishment, but has always been a place which promotes public awareness of the needs of the intellectually disabled.

The staff at the centre does a great job of ensuring that residents are included in their community and that they enjoy active and productive lives. The staff also provides services to children and families to help them manage and overcome the challenges of living with a disability. One of these initiatives is the family support program, which helps about 40 families a year with referrals, government forms, school issues, recreation and leisure planning, and other family needs.

Bill 83, the Protecting Vulnerable People Against Picketing Act, is an important piece of legislation that ensures that all individuals living with an intellectual disability will be able to feel safe, secure and comfortable in their own home, regardless of the labour activities that go on outside of their house and around their community. I strongly recommend that everyone in this House support this piece of legislation today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I commend the author of this bill for bringing it forward. It permits a discussion around a very important issue that we have.

Like everybody else in this chamber—I trust that everybody else believes in the constitutional right of any working woman or man to belong to a trade union and to freely collectively bargain. I know that the Liberal government doesn't want to extend that right to agricultural workers, but they have to live with that.

I also believe very, very strongly that the right to withdraw labour is a critical part of living in a democratic society. Again, it's another right that's a constitutional right. It's a right that's protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and so is the right to picket.

I understand that group living residences, as described in the bill, are people's homes. They're also people's workplaces. I also understand, I hope all of us do, that people working in those supported group living residences are among the lowest-paid workers in Ontario.

1450

I was impressed with the material put together by Community Living Ontario, Behind Closed Curtains. I read the commentaries of people whose first names are referred to, and I'm concerned about some of the upset that these people endured. I am concerned that there are reports of presumably a worker on a picket line striking a strobe into someone's bedroom. I find that deplorable behaviour.

That's the sort of thing a former criminal lawyer—I suppose one is never a former criminal lawyer. Once a criminal lawyer, always a criminal lawyer, which is an appropriate profession for entering politics, of course. I recall, as a criminal lawyer, that the charge of mischief—which is not a trivial charge, although it sounds trivial—would be an appropriate criminal charge for somebody who did something like that, flashing a strobe into somebody's bedroom, disrupting their sleep, interfering with their use of their home.

I also know that no worker anywhere in this province ever goes on strike willingly or with any delight or pleasure, especially low-wage workers, because a low-wage worker suffers even more when they lose a week, two weeks, three weeks or four weeks of wages.

I'm also touched by the comment and the material in *Behind Closed Curtains* about how little some of our friends who are living in group living residences receive by way of ODSP. There is one comment, here—again, I find it quite sympathetic—that says, “These guys are going on strike for better wages. I live on \$32 a week.” I understand that.

People should know that we've been in this Legislature aggressively addressing this government about its failure to allow people, some of them living in supported group living residences, the dignity of decent incomes, the dignity of decent and real work, the dignity of being included in all facets of the community's life. It's for all of those reasons that I can't support the legislation. It's for all of those reasons that I can't. Our friends who live in supported group living residences aren't “those people.” They're our neighbours. They're our sisters and brothers. They're our children. They're our parents.

You see, one of the realities of living in the community—heck, I can tell you that nothing is more inconvenient than being in Winnipeg and expecting to get a flight home and finding airline pilots on strike. I found that a serious inconvenience, so I took the train, and I wished the airline pilots well.

You see, one of the questions here is, why are there strikes in the first instance? No worker wants to walk a picket line when that worker would far sooner negotiate a collective bargaining agreement at the bargaining table.

So I say that all of the players here aren't laid out on the table. If we had anti-scab legislation in this province, like we used to until it was repealed, picket lines would be few and far between, and labour disputes would be far more quickly settled and resolved. If we had adequate funding—adequate funding—for programs run by ACL, Association for Community Living, amongst others, then you wouldn't have the tensions that inevitably are going to occur every time collective bargaining comes around because those lowest-paid workers of the province could expect to have their plea for a modest 2% a year, or whatever it might be, increase in their salary or wages accommodated.

We New Democrats believe in collective bargaining. We believe in the right to withdraw labour. We believe in the right of people not to be harassed or intimidated.

That's why I don't understand, for the life of me, why we haven't heard stories about applications for civil injunctions enjoining people on picket lines from doing any number of these things that have been complained about, screaming at people who live in homes that are group living residences, flashing lasers—I really wish they'd be named and outed right here in this chamber, because they deserve to be, if in fact they exist.

I respect the author of this bill, and I am well aware of her good intentions when it comes to caring for people in her community. As a Canadian who very much believes in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as a Canadian who believes in the rule of law, as a Canadian who believes in free collective bargaining, as a Canadian who believes in the right of labour to withdraw their labour and as a Canadian who believes in the power and the right of courts to intervene when public harm is being done by way of injunctions, I say that this does not address the problem. It certainly doesn't solve the problem. I'm afraid that it, in and of itself, as an issue, will aggravate and inflame rather than encourage accord.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 83, An Act to prevent picketing of supported group living residences.

Let me get to the point. I believe the stories that I've been told in my riding. I believe the residences when they tell me that things happened at their home that they didn't want to have happen and they didn't like. It threw them off, it confused them and they were disappointed. I believe those stories.

I want to say to the member opposite who's introducing the bill, the spirit in which you're providing it is laudable. The spirit in which you are providing it is a statement to who we are and how we treat each other. I don't want to make a distinction between anyone who needs special help and how we treat each other.

The member from Welland offers some sound advice when it comes to outing the individuals who perpetrated some of these things that happened to the constituents in my riding and ridings across the province that had the same experiences during that strike. I want to stand firmly by saying to you that I honestly believe the stories that I heard.

I also want to provide you with a concern that I have about the wording of the bill, and I'll be very specific. If we turn to page 1 and look at section 3 on prohibiting picketing, “Despite any other act, a person shall not, in connection with a labour dispute, engage in picketing of a supported group living residence,” the first part is what I will be, and I believe you will be, having trouble with in court: “Despite any other act.”

What I'd offer you, maybe in amendment, is the labour law challenges that took place previously when a section similar to that was used to describe that “no other bill can supersede this one”—it turned out it was the other way around. The labour law can't be superseded by somebody who's trying to circumvent what labour law

already states. So I offer that as friendly guidance to find out if there's a way to get that clarified.

The Ontario Labour Relations Act, 1995—the LRA—neither defines nor expressly authorizes or regulates picketing in the context of a legal strike. Picketing is lawful at common law but may be limited if it involves criminal or quasi-criminal activity, such as trespassing, or tortious activity, such as nuisance, intimidation, inducing breach of contract or defamation.

Generally, picketing in Ontario is regulated through three means. Court injunctions: Courts have the power to regulate picketing through injunctions issued under sections 101 and 102 of the Courts of Justice Act, the CJA. Injunctions may be sought by workplace parties or even third parties. Injunctions in the context of labour disputes are addressed explicitly in section 102.

Section 102 of the CJA requires that, prior to issuing an injunction, the court must be satisfied that reasonable efforts to obtain police assistance with respect to alleged danger of damage to property, injury to persons, obstruction to “lawful entry or exit from the premises ... or breach of the peace have been unsuccessful.”

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Labour board orders, which is the third option: Under sections 100 and 101 of the LRA, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the jurisdiction to regulate picketing activity in the context of a legal strike or lockout. Board remedies may be sought by the employer or the unions involved in the workplace dispute.

I wanted to make sure that we are on record as to what I think is the practical application of our discussion this afternoon. The focus is always on getting the parties back to the table to reach a negotiated settlement. For the record, 97% of all labour disputes were successfully worked out without a work stoppage. We are talking specifically about the context of this bill, specific to Community Living.

I've been a volunteer and worked with Community Living Brant even before I was elected, and indicate to you that, right off the bat, a very important issue that needs to be raised today is the value we must place on those who have provided the service for those who need our help. I do not in any way, shape or form believe that the workers under these circumstances should collectively be painted with any brush that these pickets have brought attention to. I want to make it clear, on the workers' behalf, that I want to be on the record as indicating that I have seen, since 1992, exemplary work being done by the citizens who are employed by Community Living. I also want to thank the staff and supervisors of Community Living for the exemplary work they do.

In terms of what we're trying to accomplish, which is to eradicate that percentage of problems that took place during a time in which these stories were told, I agree with the member. I agree that these things should not have happened, and I believe that we should be doing something to stop that from happening.

I'm going to continue to listen carefully to the debate that's going on today. I, for one, will use my right to

choose which way I want to vote during private members' time, and I will share that vote when it comes time for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm going to be very brief. I want to give a bit of extra time to the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

I fully support the bill. I support my colleague Sylvia Jones in her private member's time. I know that as the critic for community and social services and children's services, she's done an exceptional job. She continually brings forward to our caucus the issues that she faces and that the government faces, and reports on them well. This is obviously an issue that was a great deal of concern to her.

I think there's just so much common sense to this. The reality is that if there are any labour disruptions at any of the Community Living organizations, they all have central offices and those demonstrations can take place there. They can rally in large groups against the Community Living organization or against the funding that the government may not have come up with or whatever it may be that is causing the disruption. But the reality is that I think it makes so much common sense that we don't disrupt the lives of the people we are working so hard to protect.

We've been through a lot over the last few years with Community Living organizations and with the closing of the three regional centres. It's been a huge issue in my riding, and I think that if there were any kinds of labour disruptions, I would rather see those labour disruptions and rallies taking place at the centres that are run by Simcoe services and Community Living Huronia in Midland—have those rallies and demonstrations take place there and not at the group homes that the people call their residences.

It's great to see so many people here today, hopefully supporting this legislation. I hope all members of the House support it as well and look out for the people who are so vulnerable in our society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: In my office I proudly have a plaque that says, “The end of an era.” Many of us got that when Community Living came here. It's right inside the front door, so the first thing you see when you come into my office is that plaque. Above my desk, I have a little plaque with a key on it that they also gave me that day. The key is to signify the closing of the institutions. I have that proudly on my wall right by my desk so that I can see it every day.

That was a momentous day for Ontario. That was the day that every person who was formerly in an institution became a full citizen with all the rights and responsibilities of all of us. They are our friends and our neighbours. They are the people of the community. They are us, and they need to be treated like us. But they have to be treated in a way that has the same responsibilities and freedoms and joys and sorrows as all of us.

We know that in this province, from time to time, there are strikes. I certainly am inconvenienced. I know they happen. I don't like them but I have to live with them. I sometimes have to live with the garbage not being picked up—and that cost a would-be mayor his job—in Toronto. You have to live with when the TTC doesn't operate. You have to live with a great many circumstances, and I want people who are full members of our society to understand that, and I think in time they will.

I also want to thank the friends and the families and the agencies and the workers for making all of our people citizens and giving them all the rights and responsibilities.

I want to especially talk about the workers, because I know those workers do very hard work. They work extremely hard, and they are trying to do the very best within their capacity to look after the people whom they are charged to help. They work so hard that they often invite them home, they take them out to places. On holidays, if they don't have family, they invite them home for Christmas. I, too, have heard those stories, so let's be real about who we're talking about here.

Those workers were on strike for decent wages. In almost every case, the altercations that are being described here today were a result of the hiring of replacement workers. New Democrats call them scabs; other people call them replacement workers. I looked at the little book and I looked at this very brilliant photo that was used as a backdrop today: Every one of the signs talk about replacement workers and scabs. That's why the picketing was going on in front of those homes: because those lines were being crossed. Let's be real. If anti-scab legislation was the law in this province, then the picketing would not have to be in front of the home, and I would agree with the honourable member. But as long as this province continues to allow for replacement workers, then the picketers have to be there to stop those replacement workers from crossing the line. That's one of the rules of a picket. You can't do that by picketing a head office. You have to picket the place where the scabs are working or crossing the line.

I question, too, the constitutionality of this bill. My colleague from Welland has talked about it. There is the right to association. There is the right to assembly in public places. The Labour Relations Act quite clearly says that if a home is the workplace, then it is a workplace. As I said, the chief goal of picketing is not so much to draw attention, not so much to make publicity, but to ensure that people are not replacing the workers while a strike takes place. This can all be resolved by bringing in anti-scab legislation, or in the alternative—the government doesn't seem to want to do that—by calling for a negotiation and a protocol signed between all the parties before a labour dispute actually gets as far as it does, so that full collective bargaining takes place and a guarantee is made that no scab labour will be hired. I'm sure the unions would agree, if that is the case, that they would find alternate places to picket.

In the meantime, let us be real. Workers have the right. People who are full citizens have to understand that right. We need to deal with this in a very mature way, which I do not find at the present time in the body of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Before I start, I want to welcome all the Community Livings from London and our region. I see people from Tillsonburg, from Chatham and many different areas of southwest Ontario. Also, I want to welcome the staff and administrators from Community Living across the province of Ontario, and also the residents, who came to listen to this important debate.

No doubt about it, this debate is not new and has been talked about many different times. During our committee travel across the province of Ontario, many staff and residents of those group homes came to us and spoke about that dramatic and sad time when their homes had been invaded.

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Also, I listened to many different employees who work for Community Living. I want to state to this House that I worked for Community Living London for quite some time. I also worked for the Ministry of Community and Social Services as an employee for many years at the Oxford Regional Centre. I was a member of OPSEU. During that time, I never thought, as the member from Welland—I don't think any employee wants to protest or go on strike, because that salary, the money they make, is important to support their families. They do it as a last resort to get their rights established or to be listened to.

In the meantime, the residents in those group homes have a right to live in peace and tranquillity. I think we are obligated, as citizens, as a government, as employees and as administrators, to provide that peace for them. They choose to live in certain areas and also choose to be supported by certain people, and they deserve respect and the right to live in tranquillity and peace.

In the meantime, when the incidents happened in 2007, many staff, many employees who belong to OPSEU and CUPE, came to my office and expressed their regrets about the incidents. Bad things happened in different parts of the province of Ontario, especially in southwest Ontario. They regretted the action of their fellow employees and members and for what they did to the residents.

I want to assure the House and all the people listening that none of the employees want to do that; none of the employees want to do anything bad to harm those residents. When we work for Community Living, when we work for people with special needs, we work because we believe in this cause. We believe in our responsibility, as citizens, as workers, to give the best of our talent and skills to give them the support they need, because they deserve it. That's why, as a province, as a community collectively, we support those activities. That's why we, as a province, as the Ministry of Community and Social Services, as a government, as workers, do our best to

provide, to the best of our knowledge, support to people with special needs.

Therefore, to the member from Dufferin—Caledon: I read the bill and I also sought advice from the Ministry of Labour. If we pass the bill here—and maybe I have no problem to pass it—it will be doing something against the labour law, against the rights of workers in the province of Ontario to strike and protest.

I think the best venue is to create some kind of mechanism to sit down with the unions, the families and the stakeholders to create a way to protect the rights of workers across the province of Ontario. Do you know what? It's a slippery slope. I respect the people from my riding and across the province of Ontario. Everyone has a right to live in respect and dignity and to be protected. But in the meantime, we don't want to open a can of worms that we cannot control.

I want to listen to the rest of the debate and hopefully, in the end, we can find a solution to protect the residents who live across the province of Ontario and also protect the rights of people to continue to work and have the rights that have been granted by society in general.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: This is the kind of issue where some would advise you to sit on your hands and not say anything, but I find it difficult to do that.

Growing up, mom used to say that decisions between good and evil are easy. Unless you're the Oklahoma bomber, we all want to be on the side of the angels. It's decisions between competing goods that are tough.

I'm going to suggest, as one who has volunteered from time to time, that the whole issue of normalization and some of the disorientation that I've seen around labour disruptions in residential communities, coupled with the rights that were articulated well by the member from Welland—that the appropriate thing to do is to pass this bill and get it into committee so that that discussion can continue. So if I'm able to be back from my meeting at 4 o'clock, I'll stand in my place and vote in favour of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: In the time that I have available to me, I want to say very clearly that I strongly believe in the right to collective bargaining. I also believe in the right to withdraw labour services. What I do not believe is that in this particular case it is appropriate for people to picket in front of homes of people who are vulnerable.

With reference to the scab labour, I simply have this question: Who should be looking after the people who are living in those homes, if not replacement workers? Are we to leave those people on their own? Surely, there is a place and a time for everything.

Picketing in front of these homes is inappropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Jones, you have two minutes for your response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to accept any kind of amendment, friendly or otherwise, if you allow Bill 83 to move forward in committee and we can discuss it there.

To the honourable member from Welland, I understand that there is a balance between this is a workplace and it is a home. I guess where you and I disagree is that I believe it is first and foremost a home. This has never been about the right to strike. It has always been a human rights issue.

On one final note, I spoke in members' statements a number of weeks ago about Karen Gledhill of Cambridge. She was the president of Community Living Ontario. Until she passed away this summer after a battle with cancer, she was a proud voice for social inclusion, human rights and dignity for those with intellectual disabilities. Karen was passionate and often spoke about this issue. I think it would be a nice acknowledgment of the work and the years that she spent heading up Community Living Ontario to finally acknowledge that we need to talk about this issue, that it's not going away.

We had the problem in 2007. We had the problem again in 2009 in Lanark and Smiths Falls. Let's stop burying our heads in the sand and assuming that it will go away if we don't talk about it. Bring it forward in committee. Bring forward some recommendations for amendments that you believe will actually pass the labour code—the civil issues that we want to talk about. But if you do not allow Bill 83 to move any further today, you are continuing to assume that there is not a problem, and we know there is.

I ask that members think for the next 50 minutes about how they want to deal with this and allow Bill 83 to go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on Ms. Jones's ballot item at 4:05 today.

PROTECTING EMPLOYEES' TIPS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POURBOIRE DES EMPLOYÉS

Mr. Prue moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities / *Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les pourboires et autres gratifications.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Prue.

Mr. Michael Prue: Every day, people in this province—and, I daresay, probably most of the members of this Legislature—eat a meal in a restaurant. If not every day, at least once a week or fairly often, they go out and have a meal in a restaurant. Usually, at the end of that meal, it involves leaving a little gratuity for a server. Every day, people believe—including people, I think, in this Legislature—that the tip and the money that they give to the server goes to the server. The reason for this bill is that this is not what is happening in this province.

People understand that servers in many establishments are generally encouraged or are required to share their

tips with other people with whom they work. It is not uncommon for a server, a waiter or a waitress, to give a certain percentage to the cook, to the busboy, to the hostess, to the barman, to the wine steward, depending on the type of restaurant that it is—to share those tips with other people with whom they work. That is not uncommon.

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It is not the intent or the purport of this bill to change that in any way. What this bill intends to do is to make sure that the tips are not required to be shared with the owners of the restaurants themselves. This, in the industry, is called a tip-out. The employees are taking a huge hit as a result of the tip-out.

Last night, I had the opportunity to meet two friends in a little restaurant on the Danforth called the Athens. It's not an expensive place, but the guy does cook very good lamb. We were sitting there talking about a number of issues, nothing to do with the tip-out, when I told my friends that I had to leave because I wanted to go to bed early. I wanted to stand up today. I had a private member's bill that would end servers being required to give the management monies for the privilege of serving in the first place. They were in disbelief. I explained to them what the bill was. They were in disbelief.

I called over, because I know the store guy and so did the others, the guy who runs the Athens restaurant. He came and sat down with us, and he started to chronicle what is happening in literally almost all of the restaurants on the Danforth—some Greek, some other nationalities, some very expensive pubs, all of the places that people like to go to in that remarkable corner of the city. He talked about what was happening, and I could see the wide-eyed amazement of my two friends, who were very generous tippers and who had thought throughout their lives that the monies they gave went to the server.

He, in great detail, talked about what happened on a \$10 tip in most of the restaurants around him. Three dollars went to the house, in the majority of restaurants; that is, to the management. Three dollars was shared around to kitchen staff and others, which, again, I have no problem with. One dollar went to a breakage and/or uniform fee so that that would cover the breakage of any glasses or anything so the management wasn't responsible for that. Some restaurants would take money for Visa so that the employees who were serving the food had to pay the 1.5% charge that Visa charges when you use a Visa or debit card instead of cash, and the balance was given to the server, often less than \$3. The server would have to wait, if it was on Visa, until the end of the month to actually get that money, and oftentimes did not get it and could not dispute what the amount was.

After he said that, he called over a gentleman I did not know, who was a server in a more upscale restaurant further along the street, who was eating his dinner. He verified that, in fact, that is the case; that he, out of a 15% tip, would, more often than not, get less than 3% that would come to him. So it verified everything that I knew about this.

As I said, there is no difficulty and no intent in this bill to stop the sharing of tips for workers in a restaurant. That needs to continue and has to be done. This bill, though, will stop the practice of forcing people who wait tables to pay their employers to keep their jobs. The reality out there is that people earn \$8.90 to work in almost literally every restaurant in this province. It is the minimum wage. It is what is paid because it is anticipated that servers, bartenders and kitchen staff will participate and get a portion of the 15% to 20% most of us want to leave at the end of a good meal, well served. They get \$8.90, and they're expected to make up the balance of a living wage by getting a tip. That's the reality: \$8.90.

The reality today, though, is that there is a payment called a tip-out. If you do not give the money to your place of employment, you do not keep your job. If you say, "No, I'm not giving you a percentage of the tip-out," I will guarantee you that you don't have a job at the end of the night.

The reality, too, is that the monies remitted to the owners are not subject to any type of tax. Does everybody know that? So when the owner takes the money off the waiter or waitress, they do not claim it as their income and they do not claim it as a business income. It's not personal income. It's not business income. It's money that they take straight and put in their pocket, for which they are not required by law to indicate in any way to Revenue Canada.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: How do they get away with that?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is why I'm standing up here. I want you all to know what this is all about.

I was unaware of this practice until I read a very small but good article in the *Toronto Star* by Raveena Aulakh. I sent all members a copy of that article. It was last April. Since then, we started to do some research and I started to look at things. There is a *Toronto Servers Review Restaurants* blog. If you go on that, you'll see that there are many stories. Some restaurants in the city of Toronto take 100% of all tips. "If you don't want to pay 100% of all the tips that are given and turn them over to management, then don't come to work tomorrow." There is a whole list of those on the blog. There are stories where people have been fired for challenging the tip-out. There is a request by some of the people to treat the tips as wages because they are required, and Revenue Canada requires them to pay taxes on the anticipation of a 12% to 15% average tip on the food that they sell.

On that blog, there are a number of great stories, if I could read just a couple of them, concerning a group of restaurants called FAB Concepts, which is behind many successful places. They posted the following: "Effective Monday, April 5"—this is following the last increase in the minimum wage—"the current tip-out policy will be modified. The bar staff will now be tipping out 2.5% and serving staff, 4%." Then it goes on to say, "The calculation will be based on total sales." So right away, up that goes, and it's on total sales. If you think the service was lousy, and leave no tip, then the server ends up paying 4% to management for the privilege of having served

you. They got no tip and they still have to pay out the 4%. That's one big place.

The next one was Verdi Trattoria, on the other side of Bayview Avenue, not quite in East York, but the other side of the street on Bayview, in Toronto. Somebody writes, "Essy"—I guess that's the manager—"demands a 2% tip-out to the house. For that I get no deal on food, no support staff and am expected to pay from my own pocket if I make a mistake or have a walk-out. After all that I am forced to wait for my pay and my tips! What a guy!"

Somebody writes about Bocca on Baldwin, a couple of blocks from here, where I've eaten before and I'm sure members of this Legislature have: "I worked for Bocca on Baldwin.

"They wanted a 4% tip-out, all of which went to the house. When I was hired I was told that this money went to the 'Manager' (the owners' son), for his help with bussing and seating, food running etc. However, I soon discovered that most of my shifts were to be worked on my own, with no support staff at all. Nonetheless, tip-out was mandatory." The manager's son, I guess, needed a job and some money.

This is not what the restaurant industry intends. The restaurant industry itself does not tell the people to do tip-outs. I think some greedy owners are looking at this as a way of making easy money, easy tax-free money, on the backs of their workers. We simply want to end this. I think this is one of the shortest bills that has ever been before this House. It only has one operative sentence. This is a change to the Employment Standards Act. The sentence says: "14.1 An employer shall not take any portion of an employee's tips or other gratuities." That's it; that's all it says.

What this would do is it would ensure that when people, patrons, go into a restaurant, if they feel the service was a good service and want to reward the staff, that the money goes to the staff. If the restaurateurs believe that more money ought to be made, then please make it legally. If you're going to make money, then you're subject to corporate tax and all the other things—business tax. If you think that you deserve more money, then you should be willing to claim that on your income tax as well. The poor server has to, so I think the managers, if they are going to take the money, should as well.

I do know that the restaurant association—and I have a quote here. This is taken from the Toronto Star article near the bottom. Peter Adams, director of communications at the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, is quoted as saying, "It's certainly unusual. Sharing (tips) with management is not something we promote."

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I know that some think that restaurateurs are struggling, and I agree that some of them are, but restaurants, ever since I was a young lad, have a shelf life. We know that many restaurants do not last more than four or five years. They become cachet, they're the place to be, and then, all of a sudden, they're not there anymore. They

change hands; they change décor; they change ownership; they change staff. That's something that restaurateurs have to know.

I am simply asking for fairness for the hard-working men and women of this province: those who sling the food, who carry the beer, who bring the wine, who have a smile on their faces every night. They deserve a decent wage. They deserve to keep the tips that they have been given. They deserve some kind of respect.

I'm asking that you support this bill. I'm looking forward to the debate, but support this bill knowing that there are 50,000 or 100,000 servers out there who are waiting and hoping that you do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 114, because I think it really embodies what private members' time should be all about, and I know that gets tossed around here on a regular basis.

With this, I think the member has identified what may be a potential gap in the legislation. As politicians, we often put ourselves in the shoes of consumers or in the shoes of stakeholders. As somebody who goes out to eat on a fairly regular basis, either for business or just for the social pleasure of it, I've always assumed that when I gave a tip, it went to the people who were doing the serving. I didn't expect it all to go to the person or to the waiter or waitress who was serving me; I expected that it would be shared amongst the staff. I didn't think it would go to the owner of the restaurant; I didn't think that it would be shared. I thought that was included in the price. If the meal was \$10, I expected \$10 to go to the house and what I left behind to go to the people who had served me. In this case, it appears that the member has brought forward some evidence that that may not be the way that it's happening in practice today.

I think you can look at some of the great things that we've done as a government and as a Legislature in trying to improve the working conditions of people within the province, especially those in some of the lower-income areas. Servers' wages, for example, have increased by about 50%, from about \$6 to approaching \$9 today.

You can also look at this two ways: Currently in Canada, nine out of 13 jurisdictions do not have any legislation that affects the provision of tips, so you can look at that and say that Ontario is with the majority and perhaps it's doing the right thing by not having it today. But that's not how I look at this. I think we should be looking at it the other way, that perhaps when the member uncovers evidence such as he has uncovered, it may be time, despite the good things we've been able to do for those with lower income—we expect that employers will treat their employees with respect, but we would also expect that those consumer expectations that we all have, which I think are held in common by members of all parties, are exactly the expectations that are met when you do that exchange of money. It appears that that's not having the intended outcome.

When you look at the service and hospitality industry in Ontario, the people who are employed in that may be young people who are going to university. It may be a part-time job. It may be people who do it on a full-time basis; it may be their career. There are a number of people employed in this industry, and I think they do a great job for the province of Ontario. By and large, when people come to Ontario, I think they are treated with the respect that people anticipate they should be treated with as a guest.

When you go to other jurisdictions, that doesn't happen. In other jurisdictions, you'll see people of a lower income who don't get the same sort of treatment that is received currently under the Employment Standards Act in the province of Ontario today and some of the improvements that we've seen to that.

I don't think we need to say that the sky is falling, but certainly this is a bill that is worthy of further discussion. It's a bill that should be moved forward. The evidence that the member has provided, that the association itself is concerned about these practices, should be instructive to all members as they vote.

When you look at what we've been able to do as a government to enforce the Employment Standards Act, I think we've had a multi-pronged approach that, by and large, is working quite well. If you look at the facts and figures between 1989 and 2000, there were 97 prosecutions initiated under the Employment Standards Act. Since 2004, there have been over 1,800 prosecutions initiated.

We're starting to recover the money that is owed to people whose employment was terminated and they ended up having to chase the employer for that money. We've recovered more than \$50 million for those people. Often, they are the most vulnerable employees: people who don't know how the system works, people who can't avail themselves of legal advice.

We're handling way more claims than we did before: 16,000 claims in 2003, and today in Ontario, there are 20,000 claims being handled. We're increasing our staff, obviously, at the Ministry of Labour.

The Employment Standards Act covers restaurant employees. However, getting back to my initial point: The point of private members' time, I think, is to have this type of discussion, where you're able to identify a gap or identify something about a situation that exists in the province of Ontario that, as a private member, you can bring forward some good legislation to do something about.

I certainly am prepared to stand in the House today as a proud member of the McGuinty government but also as the MPP for my riding of Oakville representing my constituents. I believe my constituents would agree with the intent of the member from Beaches–East York's Bill 114, which is before us today.

I will be standing in support of this bill; I would like to see it discussed further. I would hope that most restaurants in the province of Ontario understand that the consumer's expectation is that when a tip is given, that tip is

shared among the employees and does not go into their hands. I think it's just common courtesy; it's common decency. If it's something that needs to be enshrined in legislation, then this discussion should continue further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 114, introduced by the member from Beaches–East York.

I think it truly is unfortunate that some of these unsavoury business practices that the member was speaking about, which were the motivation behind this bill, are indeed increasing and have become commonplace in Toronto. Thankfully—and I have talked with many servers and restaurateurs in my riding—these practices have not gained favour throughout Ontario, but they are increasing.

This bill is probably in the Guinness Book of Records as the shortest bill; it is one sentence. I think that although it offers a lot of clarity for many people, it also doesn't reflect some of the very important nuances that should be addressed. I support this bill, but I do believe that it ought to go to committee and have some of those subtle nuances talked about, where it may have some shortcomings. I don't believe those shortcomings can't be overcome in a full and complete discussion in committee.

I will say that I have a family friend who lives in Toronto and works at a good local restaurant here. His name is Aldo Pescatore-Tardioli, and his tips are taken by his employer. When he makes a 10% tip, his employer gives him back 3%; 7% of the tip goes to the restaurant. When he makes a 15% tip, he gets 3%. That's the maximum he is going to get as a server.

Now, you might say why would you want to perform better, do a better job, give better quality service? You are capped in that restaurant. Really, our Employment Standards Act—our labour laws—recognize the need for gratuities in the service industry. That's why we have a lower minimum wage for servers, with the expectation that good-quality service will be rewarded with gratuities, only to find that there are an increasing number of establishments that are clawing back and taking that money under many, many guises. But it still comes down to it not being right that these people are facing a double jeopardy of working for a lower hourly rate, and then having management clawing back and taking their gratuities. I think that's totally wrong. It's unfortunate that it's happening. Now that we do know it is happening, we ought to do something to limit and prevent that unsavoury business practice.

1540

I know that my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora will also speak on this bill because there are some of those other details, such as that the Canada Revenue Agency is now looking at restaurants. The amount that is tipped out under their control—these restaurateurs are having to pay employment insurance and CPP premiums on those tips. That's one of those significant details that

needs to be talked about in committee and how we can address that. But that is a failing of the Canada Revenue Agency, and I think we need to look at that and include some mechanism in this bill that limits the Canada Revenue Agency in doing this to restaurateurs and having that negative consequence on our servers.

I have seen it. These tip outs come in many, many guises: breakage fees, uniform fees, walkout fees. In speaking with a number of servers down here, it has gone to the point where in some establishments, the tip out is 100% of the tip; 100% of the tip is off to management. We all know that that is not acceptable; it's unsavoury.

I have to commend the member from Beaches–East York for bringing this bill forward. I do hope that all parties support this initiative and that all parties will work together in committee to make sure that we have it right, that we aren't creating a double jeopardy for restaurants in the way the CRA is attacking them, but strengthening and protecting those people in the service industry and ensuring that they continue to have that incentive to deliver good-quality, high-quality service, and that they are remunerated for their good-quality service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise in support of my benchmate's bill. It's an excellent bill, a small bill, but a necessary bill, clearly, because this practice is becoming widespread in Toronto.

It's a practice I only began to hear about a couple of years ago. My daughter is actually in the trade and now has a bar-restaurant of her own, but she used to work as a bartender. If anybody wants a sort of black laugh, they should check *The Bartender Hates You* on YouTube, because you will see there very clearly what some bartenders have to live with and through, and servers as well. It's not a pretty picture.

This bill points to the very creaky old truck that is the Employment Standards Act, which is desperately in need of a tune-up. This bill is part of that tune-up. Let me remind you that this is a province where you can fire a woman while she is on mat leave. This is a province where people who work cleaning ministry buildings are called not employees, but independent contractors, hence, they make less than minimum wage. This is a province where employers get away with breaking the existent employment standards laws with impunity because there are very few inspections of places of employment. That's the big picture into which this piece fits.

I know for a fact, because I have been told by recent immigrants in my riding, that many of their employers do not pay them minimum wage, even though it's illegal. They tell me that if they complain, they have been told that they will be fired. I have explained, and so have my constituency staff, their rights under our laws in Ontario, but they're not going to complain because they're going to lose their job, and where are they going to go? This is the situation. We need an employment standards structure that will investigate these breaches and that will bring them into the light of day without jeopardizing the

employees who work there. That's simply not happening in any place of employment.

To reiterate what has been said, the minimum wage for servers and bartenders is \$8.90 an hour right now in Ontario. I remember the huge fight that it took to raise the minimum wage across this province. This \$8.90 an hour is far less than the poverty rate in Ontario. If you're making \$8.90 and that's all you're making, you're not able to feed yourself, pay your rent and live with any kind of dignity in this province unless you use a food bank or get help from somewhere else etc.

Clearly, this is set up knowing or expecting that the people who work and receive this wage on an hourly basis also get some other income. The income is called tips. That's what it is set up to do. It's set up to be a buffer. One of the major sources of income if you're a server or a bartender is your tips.

I read in the *Star* article the Minister of Labour's very anemic—very anemic—response to my benchmate the member from Beaches–East York's good bill. His response was sad because it's sort of like Pontius Pilate wiping his hands. He said, "Well, you know, tips aren't wages, so they have nothing to do with the Ministry of Labour." Please. The reason that servers and bartenders get such a pathetic hourly rate is because we expect that they will be tipped and that they will keep their tips.

I know that the member from Beaches–East York's bill has come as a surprise to many people in this city and in this province. Most people go into a restaurant or a bar thinking that the tip, yes, helps to alleviate the poverty of the busboys and other staff, but never that the tip goes in any way, shape or form to the owner of the establishment. Presumably, they're making enough money that they don't have to rely on somebody making less than the poverty rate to subsidize their own income.

Having said that, my portfolio is small business. I know that there are many establishments out there that are hanging on by their fingernails; there's no question about it. There are many establishments I know where the servers make more than the owner of the establishment just with their tips. I know that's the case. Usually, they're not the ones that are practising this tip-out process. Really, when you look at the list of the restaurants that are practising tipping out to management or the owners, they tend to be the larger establishments, the well-established establishments, the chain restaurants—again, a picture of the economy in Ontario in a snapshot here.

I want to also point out that, ultimately, what would be really wonderful in this province is to have our servers and our bartenders make a living wage like they do in other jurisdictions. In Sweden, when my husband and I were there, the living wage paid in a McDonald's was the equivalent of around \$13 or \$14 dollars an hour here because the staff at McDonald's were unionized. Imagine that: a McDonald's that's unionized. Who would have ever thunk it? There's no tipping in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries—and Australia. People who have been to Australia and New Zealand will experience this

as well. Why? Because the staff are unionized and they make a decent living wage. That's interesting.

I remember an Ontario where bartenders used to be unionized. Is anybody else old enough to remember that? I remember that there was a bartenders' union, that they made a living wage, that they went on strike occasionally and that they had the rights that the union afforded. Again, that's maybe a destination that we might want to get to in the province instead of making the servers dependent upon what we will give them.

Having said that, one of the points that's also important to note is that many establishments in Toronto and other places in Ontario, if you have a large group, levy a tip automatically on your bill. It's usually about 15% for large groups. Imagine if that tip-out is levied automatically and still goes to the owner and manager. The server gets not a penny of it in many instances, quite frankly.

1550

The other egregious action that many establishments take is that if the patron walks away and doesn't pay their bill, the server or the bartender is liable for the entire bill. That's outrageous as well—another practice that should be investigated.

I have a motion on the order paper calling for a 25% inspection rate of all places of employment in Ontario, because breaches of employment standards are becoming the norm. They're not the exception anymore. I've lost track of the number of complaints that come into our constituency office about very basic issues having to do with employment standards—minimum wage, for example. Minimum wage is often not paid to new immigrants, to students and to others.

By the way, the student minimum wage, extremely unfairly, we in the New Democratic Party believe, is less than the stated minimum wage of \$10.25, because they're students. That makes no sense to me. Students in Ontario carry some of the highest debt loads across the country right now. Why should they be paid less, as a minimum wage, than any other worker?

Again, there is a huge problem in the province of Ontario with employment standards. What my benchmark, the member from Beaches–East York, has done is to attack the portion of that that has to do with servers and bartenders in the restaurant and bar industry and this horrendous practice called tipping out.

Many establishments estimate the tip and take a percentage of it. Some take the entire thing, forcing their servers or bartenders to work for \$8.90 an hour, significantly below the minimum wage and significantly below the poverty rate. This is simply unethical. It's simply wrong. It should be stopped. It's a no-brainer. It needs to be passed, and it needs to go to committee.

I warrant that what we really need to do is start to look at employment in general in this province and what passes as employment standards in this province, because there's a great deal of work to do to renovate the old truck before it runs completely aground.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the intent of the member from Beaches–East York to protect workers' rights and to bring forward this bill to amend the Employment Standards Act to avoid tip-out.

Let me say from the outset that I do not oppose what the member is trying to do. In many establishments throughout Ontario, waiters, waitresses, bussers and so forth share their tips, as already acknowledged. Those tip agreements are at times now between owners and staff, and it varies between restaurants. I'm actually quite surprised that the activity takes place.

Our government, as mentioned already, has increased the minimum wage by 50%, but we didn't increase wages all the way for waiters, specifically because of tips. Now, if we are to acknowledge that tip-outs are occurring, then we have to question the degree of the minimum wage.

The NDP called on us to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. They talked about it when they were in government. They didn't do it completely. But in this case, we have surpassed it. As mentioned already by my colleague, nine out of 13 jurisdictions in Canada do not even have tips included in their legislation. So I commend the member for bringing it forward.

We expect that employers treat their employees with respect. Managers and owners understand that success depends on a service staff that is competent, caring and compensated appropriately. Good service is good for not only the business owner, but certainly for the sector entirely, the tourism industry and for the employee.

All of us, I would say, but our government specifically, are on the side of the workers, and we recognize that the challenges they face in businesses also have an effect during these uncertain times, as acknowledged by the member from Beaches–East York already. It occurred to me that the things he discussed in terms of the cost of doing business, be it breakage fees or walkouts or even, for that matter, chargebacks on Visa transactions, that it does have an impact on the businesses. It appears to me that changing the tip out factor would, in fact, make an impact on the cost of goods and services and food, in this case, by which the pricing on those dinners is being charged. In order for the financial impact to be appropriate, we compensate it.

I sympathize with the workers, and I also recognize the demands on businesses to survive in this highly competitive hospitality industry. All need to be protected and all need to work together.

The member from Parkdale–High Park talked about the Employment Standards Act. It's important to recognize that we have, in fact, done more in regard to supporting workers over the last while as opposed to during the previous two governments combined. We've adopted a multi-pronged approach that consists of increased outreach, education and enforcement and prosecution, along with more employment standards officers than ever before. We've prosecuted—between 1989 and 2003, there were only 97 prosecutions initiated; since 2004, there have been over 1,800 prosecutions. We've re-

covered more than \$15 million in wages and other monies owing to vulnerable employees through inspections, claims and collections.

One of the main policy rationales—and in introducing an increase—to the lower minimum wage for liquor services is the fact that these employees, as already stated, receive a portion of their income through tips. If there are further reports of businesses demanding part of the tips from these employees, then it may be more difficult for the government to justify a lower wage for liquor servers. A lower wage for liquor servers is also intended to balance the need to keep Ontario's hospitality industry financially stable and competitive.

With that said, I appreciate the member from Beaches–East York for bringing forward this issue. It does deserve further consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend my colleague from Beaches–East York for his aggressive bill, which is going to hopefully change the lives of some of the people in our society that are at the low end of the wage scale.

Going back, I can remember in 1965, when I was a busboy at the then Pines restaurant, which was quite the upscale restaurant in Stoney Creek at the time, the day they hired me. They said, "Paul, you're going to work and do this, clean the tables, do all this, and you're going to get a cut of the tips that we get." The maître d' said that and the head waiters. "You're going to get a cut at the end."

I worked there for about two years and I think I saw a tip maybe twice in two years. It was always at the end of the night, after I was running around doing the dishes, cleaning up everything, doing anything, that the waiter would say, "You know, Paul, we had a slow night tonight. There's nothing there," which was total nonsense because the place was packed. So the kids got ripped off. These guys pocketed the money, the owners took their share and the busboys and some of the people in the kitchen staff got nothing, except their little wage, which was—I don't even want to tell you how much they worked for in those days.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know; 35 cents an hour or some 50 cents an hour or something. It was ridiculous—two bucks an hour; I can't remember.

Mr. Michael Prue: Not that high.

Mr. Paul Miller: It wasn't even that high. I think it was \$1.30.

But the bottom line is, these people are in our society, working hard day in and day out in the service industry, and, like the member said, they're friendly and they're cordial. They have to come to work with a positive attitude. They cannot be moody, because the owner will be all over them. Believe me, in the cost of meals in restaurants in this province, the owner takes in all considerations of possible—for the chef, for the cost of lighting it, for the utilities. Believe me, that's built into your costs when you pay that bill.

I personally like to see the money go directly to the server, so I personally charge it on my charge card to the restaurant and I give cash to the waiter, as much as I can, when possible, because I know it's going into their pocket. These people deserve a lot better treatment.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. This is a disturbing topic and one really very near and dear to me. I have a daughter who entered the hospitality industry; in fact, she worked her way through university as wait staff. I heard many stories from her about what she thought she would get and what she ended up getting.

I have a son who thought he wanted to be a chef, went to culinary school and found it virtually impossible to continue. In fact, he did change careers at my advice, because it seemed that regardless of who the employer was, there was always a shortage at the end of the week in terms of what his expectations were in terms of remuneration.

It's a difficult, difficult business. So I'm not surprised that a piece of legislation like this has come forward. At some point, someone was going to raise the issue as to what actually is going on in this industry.

I do, however, want to read into the record some aspects of this whole business of tipping. I think my colleague made reference earlier to something that perhaps should bring us closer to where we need to be in this province.

I have always questioned the disparity in the minimum wage between everyone else and those in the hospitality industry. I understand the rationale in terms of the tipping policy, but when we see what is actually going on and who gets those tips, I really think it's something that should be looked at, and that at the very least we level the playing field on the issue of the minimum wage.

I want, just for the record, to provide some information to my colleagues in terms of how the Canada Revenue Agency views this whole issue of tipping. I have an interesting article here from James Rhodes, who is an associate with Miller Thomson, a specialist on the issue of taxation particularly relative to the hospitality industry:

"The CRA splits tip amounts received by servers ... into two categories. The first category is referred to as 'controlled tips.' These are gratuities received by the servers ... over which the restaurant has exercised sufficient 'control' before payout to servers. The second category is referred to as 'direct tips.' These are tips received by servers ... over which the restaurant did not exercise sufficient 'control' before payout to servers."

Now, here's the interesting part: "Where direct tips are paid to servers, the restaurant is not required to account for what each server receives...."

"However"—and this accounts for about 95% of all tips that are actually paid on credit cards, because those are considered where the restaurateur has total control—

“where controlled trips are paid to servers, the restaurant is required to record this on their T4 slips, and to take payroll deductions for income tax, EI and CPP. Further, the restaurant has to pay its employer contribution of EI and CPP on controlled tips.”

Now, here is the issue from the standpoint of the owner of a restaurant. If he is obligated to pay his portion of contributions for the various deductions, and if he is required to disclose those, then quite frankly I think we're talking about a situation where restaurant owners are not complying with the law. If they were, then all of this would be fully disclosed. We would also recognize that there are, in fact, some costs such as contributions from the restaurant owner to these various deductions and of course the cost of processing those tips through the credit card process.

So I do think there are some legitimate costs that are inherent for restaurant owners. I'm concerned about the bill before us, because it is so very simplistic, as has already been admitted. True, we're trying to get at an issue. I am not personally convinced that this particular bill, in its simplicity, is going to get us where we need to be. I do think it has raised our caution on something that is going on in this industry that needs to be dealt with. I am simply saying that I think, first of all, what we need is disclosure and transparency. I think it's only fair that people who read a menu have full disclosure as to where the tip is going to go. If it's determined that the restaurant is going to take 10% or 20% to cover costs, whether that be for employee deductions or other aspects of doing business, that should be disclosed. The fact that it's not been disclosed—

Mr. Paul Miller: Ripped off.

Mr. Frank Klees: —and the fact that there are employees who are being ripped off by restaurant owners is wrong. We have a responsibility, I believe, to do something about that. The actual result I don't believe necessarily lies in this bill, but it does behoove to us look at what the answer is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? If not, Mr. Prue has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from Oakville, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Parkdale-High Park, Mississauga South, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and Newmarket-Aurora for your comments.

I've only got two minutes. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington said something which I had not heard before, and that is that a restaurant that he is aware of remits back to the server 3%. It doesn't matter whether the server got a 10% tip, a 15% tip or a 20% tip; the most they could possibly get would be 3% in terms of the gratuity. That says a lot in terms of a restaurant's practice but also gives, as he quite correctly says, no incentive for people to try to do a good job, to try to put that extra little personal touch. After all, when tips were established at the turn of the century, that's what they were for. The acronym, whether it's true or

not, meant “to improve service” or something to that effect. But if all the employee can get is 3%, that says that something is very wrong with the system.

The member from Newmarket-Aurora raises some very real issues around Canada Revenue. We do know that servers are required to declare their tips. I am not naive enough to think that every single tip has been declared, but overall, the Canada Revenue Agency, for a generation or two generations, has estimated the tips, and servers are required to pay taxes on them. The new phenomenon is that some of the owners are pocketing that tip money and keeping it and they are not paying their share of the income tax.

The bill is simplistic: Yes, it is. The law now today, under the labour code, is that tips are not wages. What we're saying is that tips are wages, and the owners ought to keep their hands off them, as required with real wages.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has now expired. Time to vote.

ONTARIO AWARD FOR PARAMEDIC BRAVERY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE PRIX DE BRAVOURE DES AUXILIAIRES MÉDICAUX DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mrs. Van Bommel.

Mrs. Van Bommel has moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to provide for the Ontario Award for Paramedic Bravery. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Van Bommel?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I ask that it be brought to the committee on social policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that it go to the committee on social policy? So ordered.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE AGAINST PICKETING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES GENS VULNÉRABLES CONTRE LE PIQUETAGE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 44.

Mrs. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 83, An Act to prevent picketing of supportive group living residences. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On division, noted.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On division, noted.

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with the next ballot item.

PROTECTING EMPLOYEES' TIPS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POURBOIRE DES EMPLOYÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 45.

Mr. Prue has moved second reading of Bill 114, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to tips and other gratuities. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Prue.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to move this to the regulations and private bills committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I will refer the bill to the regulations and private bills committee. Agreed? So ordered.

We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1610 to 1615.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE AGAINST PICKETING ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES GENS VULNÉRABLES CONTRE LE PIQUETAGE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 83. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Dhillon, Vic	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Moridi, Reza	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shaffiq	
Hardeman, Ernie	Rinaldi, Lou	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 25; the nays are 7.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Jones.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I ask that Bill 83 be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed that the bill be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee? So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business have now been completed. I do now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to rise and debate on Bill 110, which is entitled An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

When this bill was tabled, it was the title of the act that grabbed my attention, because for the McGuinty government to claim good government is really quite bizarre.

We have had a litany of legislation, taxation, red tape and regulations imposed by this government, which has resulted, quite frankly, in the undermining of the quality of life of people in this province. Rather than encouraging enterprise and encouraging economic development, one piece of legislation after another, one regulation after the other, has done nothing but stifle the economy of this province.

1620

I want to take just a minute to read into the record some correspondence that I have received from my constituents over the last number of months. I refer to an email from Mr. Eric Smith from Newmarket. I quote him as saying that he has no faith in this government. He speaks about government and its role. He says this:

"The government's primary role is to protect us from predators. Instead, it has become one.

"I am tired of being bled dry by tax after tax and watching stupid projects wasting more and more of my money by all levels of government."

Mr. Eric Smith is someone who is active in our community, and he doesn't take criticism of government lightly. What he has appealed to me to do is to just draw the attention of this government to the fact that it's becoming more and more difficult for him as a senior in our province to make ends meet.

I quote him again:

"I see a large move towards Big Brother politics.

"Please pass this on to other members of your party."

I'm pleased to do so. In fact, I'm passing it on to members of the government so that they can hear what this individual is saying.

I quote again:

"As a 60-year-old, I have been a Liberal supporter, as were my children, my parents, and my grandparents before me. No longer.

"Your party, during its tenure, has done more damage to Ontario than any that have gone before you"—he's speaking to the Liberal Party—"and is plagued with lies, broken promises, and wasteful spending.

"You have made Ontario a haven for ... drunk drivers, and murderers that get two-for-one deals. Spend a day in a criminal courthouse where every case is remanded over and over.

"I have served jury duty three times in my life.

"I turn on the TV, and see a commercial for 'I lost my life savings gambling,' and the next commercial says 'Casino Rama, we build excitement,' and now, another lottery scandal. Fix it or get out of it."

This is a frustrated constituent, who, I believe, is reflective of many in this province who are frustrated with the taxes, frustrated with the regulations, the increased costs and the difficulties they're having to make ends meet.

In the midst of that, we have yet another bill from this government, and they have the nerve to call it an act to promote good government. What they simply are doing with this legislation is laying on additional regulations and additional red tape. In the end, they are constricting Ontarians further from doing business.

I have another letter from a business person in the riding. He writes this—and it's interesting that the bill before us, Bill 110, deals with a number of ministries. Ironically, this letter from my constituent also deals with a number of constituencies, and he starts off with the Ministry of Revenue. Here's what he says:

"I own and operate a general insurance brokerage ... in Aurora with 13 employees. While I know you are not part of the governing party, I must write to convey to you the incredible amount of time, energy and expense our business is experiencing simply trying to keep up with new legislation the McGuinty government is throwing at us.

"After months of inquiring about whether there was anything my company needed do with respect to preparing for implementation of the HST, we get advised today in a letter dated June 14 from the Ministry of Revenue that we have to contact the government to get ourselves re-registered for the RST...."

He goes on to talk about inability of complying with the timelines that the government, at the last minute, is laying on this business.

He goes on to talk about the MTO: "[T]he MTO conducted an audit in February of the motor vehicle records ... we've ordered. We use the MVRs to provide sales and services to our customers. While we could produce all of the information the MTO asked for during the audit, the information was not assembled in the list format they tell us they now prefer."

He goes on to talk about the complications that the MTO has imposed upon their business, simply a matter of not accepting the information that they've asked for as they're able to provide it, but now it has to be provided in the order and listings according to the MTO. No one is asking how much cost this is imposing on small business; no one is asking about the frustrations; no one is asking about the effect on the bottom line.

He goes on to talk about the Attorney General, who presented this bill before us. He talks about Bill 168, which he says "seems to have come out of nowhere for something that can have such large ramifications on small business owners." We raised these concerns during debate of that particular bill many times. "There was very little publicity or awareness about this bill until a few months before it became effective. It seems to have been a stealth effort to slide it in under the cover of all the HST confusion."

Again, the appeal of this business person to this government is to say, "Look, understand that we have a business to run, and at least deal with us in a responsible and respectful way. Don't impose on us, at the last minute, impositions and regulatory requirements that are virtually impossible for us to cope with, certainly within the timelines that you're imposing on us."

He speaks about finance. He says, "Lastly, with regards to the changes to auto insurance legislation, it has been drafted with good intent and something obviously needed to be done to keep auto insurance affordable. But once again, its execution is poorly planned. We will have to start dealing with affected policyholders starting July 1, yet FSCO hasn't approved new insurance rates for most insurance companies I've spoken with, the definition of what institutes a minor injury has just been released, and I am told that the definition of a catastrophic injury will not likely be released until the end of the year...." Once again, good intentions, but the way this government is rolling out regulation after regulation on businesses in this province is causing them great angst and great cost.

At the end of the day, if this government wants to talk about good government, all they have to do is listen to the people of this province, who are willing to give them advice in terms of how to roll out these regulations. Provide them with some time, treat them with respect, treat them in the way that they deserve to be treated as contributing members of our society, as contributing businesses.

The issue that I have had more complaints about in my constituency office—more than anything else—is the

disrespect with which this government is treating businesses across the province. I'm hopeful that they're at least listening to some degree and will do something to ensure that the businesses in this province that create the jobs will get the co-operation of the people in the field working for the various ministries, who should be working for the taxpayers, not against them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always impressive to listen to the member from Newmarket–Aurora. He's an eloquent speaker, and he makes his points forcefully. Certainly I look forward to some time to speak on this bill as well, which is really—let's face it—a housekeeping bill, but with a title like good government, one can't help but jump in and debate the very title of the bill, which is a debatable subject, like everything else in the bill, and really take the opportunity to comment on whether this is good government in the province of Ontario or not, and why not, if not. I look forward to doing that.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora has started off the discussion by talking about the devastating impact this government has had on small business. I certainly witness that everywhere in my riding. Certainly this is a government of the mall and not Main Street. It's a government of big business, not small business.

1630

Small business is hurting; small business came here to plead with this government before they imposed the HST, and this government would not listen, would not take a meeting, ignored them, and that's sad. It's arrogant, and certainly that is not good government at the end of the day. In terms of the regulations, most are fairly minor housekeeping items. Some have some problems, and I don't want to ignore those problems; I'll speak about them. But the title "good government" forces the opposition—this is pretty obvious—to vote against or for a bill that describes the McGuinty government as good, which many of us would of course have a hard time doing.

At any rate, I look forward to speaking to it. I always look forward to hearing the comments of the member from Newmarket–Aurora, especially his work around the OSPCA, another act of bad government on behalf of the McGuintys.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to speak for a couple of minutes to this bill, the Good Government Act. It's worth repeating again that the majority of the content of this particular piece of legislation is to bring up to date some of the regulatory process we have in this province. Most people frankly ask us to do that. I think we're just doing a process that needs to be done every once in a while. I know that sometimes governments of all stripes get somewhat behind, but this is something that's needed.

You know, the opposition talks about all the challenges with businesses and all the hindrances, but they don't talk about how we have one of the lowest business

tax rates in province of Ontario. They don't talk about the advantage that I know businesses in my riding tell me. I've been self-employed all my life. I know the benefit to business from the HST. Now we have inputs that give us more advantages to compete. They don't talk about those things. That's part of good government sending out a message, sending out those signals that Ontario is open for investment.

I understand their views questioning government decisions, but I think that once in a while it's worthwhile for them to recognize and to give the message that government is listening, government is doing the right thing. Do we always get things perfectly right? Maybe not. But in the majority, when it comes to business, I think we've made huge strides in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If the member from Northumberland really believes that, he should hold a town hall meeting on the HST in his riding and explain to his constituents what a good thing it's going to be for them and how many jobs it's going to create. The fact that we've lost jobs in this province every month since July, and we're losing more and more ever since the HST has been introduced in this province—of course, that's an actual fact, something that doesn't actually concern or come into the consideration of this particular government.

Another interesting thing here: We're now in about the 10th hour of debate on this bill, and every other bill that has come before this Legislature at least for the last year gets time-allocated after about six or seven hours, long before we get to the 10-minute rotation, but this bill has not. It has not been time-allocated, and one has to wonder why. How can you time-allocate a bill that is called the Good Government Act? Is good government time allocation? I think not. But every other contentious bill that comes before the House gets time-allocated. So this bill isn't going to be time-allocated. Here we are Thursday afternoon, and normally the House rises at this point in the week, but not this week. We're going to talk this bill out, and we'll see how the people of Ontario believe this is good government for the province of Ontario, or perhaps they will believe that it's not-so-good government for the people of Ontario. That will be an interesting debate that we'll have about a year from now. Between now and then, of course, there will be lots of examples that we see every day, every week, of how this government is performing, whether it's good government or whether it's not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just to put this bill into perspective, as you know, governments of all levels have a huge responsibility in terms of the everyday running of the government. Every now and then, governments have to clarify and modernize a number of the complex regulations, systems and provincial statutes. I know that, provincially, not only have we passed a number of pieces

of legislation this year, but there are also so many others existing on the books that sometimes they're not copacetic.

This is something that has to be done to update legislation so that we can better deliver the intent of the laws that have been passed. It is a very, you might say, behind-the-scenes type of legislation, but it's got to be done to ensure that the people of Ontario get the services that they require and to make sure the people of Ontario have laws that are not, at times, contradictory or impossible to interpret.

Many laws, many statutes and many regulations can be extremely complex, especially if you look at regulations attached to legislation. People look at a bill, and there could be volumes of regs, as they call them, attached to it.

This is done periodically, as I said. It's being done by our government and past governments. It's important to get on with people's business, and that's what we're trying to do here today with this Good Government Act, 2010. Essentially, that's what it is. It's taking care of the mechanics of government. That is not in the headlines of the newspapers, but it's something behind the scenes that is essential and is required for government to do from time to time. So I'd just urge all members to support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the members from Parkdale–High Park, Northumberland–Quinte West, Halton and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments.

To the member from Eglinton–Lawrence: We know that there's nothing to this bill. It is, in fact, merely housekeeping. What is the most offensive aspect of this bill is the title, and that is good government, which is a total contradiction of anything that we've seen since this government came into office: one bill after another, one tax after another, one regulation after another, anything but good government.

So here we are debating a bill entitled good government. There should be, quite frankly, a law against that. There should be truth in titling in this place, and that's not what we have. What we have, quite frankly, is a government that, day in and day out, does its level best to deflect attention from what it's really doing.

What it's really doing is overtaxing people, making it impossible for people to make ends meet day in and day out. They have absolutely misplaced priorities. You can spend \$1 billion on failed eHealth projects, but you can't look after children who need speech-language pathology. We can't look after people with complex disabilities, we can't address the priorities in education, but we can go out of our way to spend money in areas that are unjustifiable in anyone's rational mind.

That is not good government, and they can call bills what they want. The people of Ontario see through it. What they will do is pass judgment on the bad government that this government has been providing them over a number of years. Fortunately, that day is soon to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1640

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise in this House to give voice to the voiceless across Ontario, always. There are more and more of them who would like to be heard but are not heard by this government.

Here, of course, for those who are watching at home, we're debating a bill called "good government" that has nothing to do with good government. It's very Orwellian, actually. It's a bill that changes some regulations and makes some slight amendments to various laws. It's a housekeeping bill and could be called just about anything but good government.

Mr. Michael Prue: Much ado about nothing.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: As my benchmate from Beaches–East York says, a much-ado-about-nothing bill. That's what we've got in front of us.

Why do we say this over here in the New Democratic Party? Why do we talk about the lack of good government from the other side of the aisle, from the McGuinty side? We're not alone in talking about that, of course. There is a wind of change across this province. I'm hearing it in my own riding. I'm speaking to people day in and day out who are stretched, seniors who cannot afford to pay the HST on their hydro. That extra \$100 or \$200 a month will force them to lose their homes, possibly. I'm talking to young couples who would like to be able to get into the housing market and can't. I'm talking to those who have lost good, middle-class jobs, a dying phenomenon across Ontario, and are forced to take jobs at slightly over minimum wage, and they can't pay the rent and feed their children.

For the first time, really, on a generalized basis, our children are going to do worse than we do, and we, in many instances, have done worse than our parents did. This was not the immigrant dream that this country and this province were founded on, but that's the reality in which we live in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. There's no question about that. That's quantifiable. So that's not good government.

It's not good government when your priorities are to give billions of dollars in tax cuts to large corporations while small business, Main Street, is barely hanging on for dear life; where the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas comes, representing 30,000 small businesses, and does a press conference here demanding that the HST not be passed because 85% of their members don't want it, and this government doesn't listen. In fact, this government doesn't even have a portfolio for small business anymore. That's how little regard they have for small business, which provides, let us not forget, 90% of the jobs across this province.

Let's think about what this government hasn't done in the way of good government for women. We do represent, still, last time I checked, about half of the population, yet women still make about 71 cents for every dollar that men make, and there's no money put into equity anymore. They're struggling. Certainly, daycare is

not a phenomenon that is happening across Ontario. Only one in 10 families can find a daycare space for their child, and if they do, if they're one of the lucky one in 10, they'll pay, usually, on average, over \$1,000 a month; whereas we're bordered by Quebec, which has \$7-a-day daycare; Manitoba, \$17-a-day daycare. What happened? I would say that for women, that's not good government.

What other groups are we looking at? For seniors, I've just talked about the impact of HST on anybody with a fixed income. We've been talking about pensions a lot in this House lately. We don't have them in Ontario; 65% of us don't have a pension in Ontario. This is a tsunami of trouble waiting, and yet the government has been happy not bringing in the Arthurs recommendations but tinkering around the edges with a bill that does the most minute possible changes here, another bill that does minute changes there, avoiding the real meat of the Arthurs recommendations and not putting that into law.

This is a government also that, of course, is not collaborative in any way, which I would assert is one of the hallmarks of good government. Good government takes ideas from opposition, runs with them, allows opposition its day in committee. Yet we saw yesterday in committee an inclusionary zoning bill, my bill, which makes a very small change, a change that has to be made if municipalities are going to be able to bring in inclusionary zoning, and that's a change to the Planning Act so that developers can't appeal to the OMB. This government wouldn't even allow it the time of day, even though they say they agree with it and passed it not once but twice in this House. That's not collaborative government. That's not government that listens to new ideas or allows an opposition its day.

Quite frankly, the people of Ontario are sick to death of the partisan nonsense that happens in this place. They're sick to death of it. They come and watch the goings-on of this House in question period and in debate, and they shake their heads. They say, "Why can't we get together and actually make some significant changes on behalf of the people of Ontario in times of trouble?" And we're in times of trouble. Why can't we work together?

A good example of working together, actually, was the committee that worked on mental health. They brought in 23 recommendations but, again, they fell on deaf ears—not good government. This government's not going to implement them.

They try to bring in the recommendations that force them to spend as little money and do as little as possible. That's essentially what they've done with this piece of very good committee work. That's not collaborative government.

Labour: We have seen labour in freefall in this province, in part because of the actions of the McGuinty government. We have proposed anti-scab legislation. That's kind of minimal. I mean, it's minimum labour standards, the kind of thing that Europeans would laugh at us about, that we don't have. And this government ignores it.

We demand that places of employment be inspected, that employment standards that allow an employee to be

called a contractor when they're really not, that would fire a woman when she's on maternity leave—that those kinds of regulations be tightened up. This government will have none of it. This government is not a government for labour. It's not a pro-labour government. That's not good government, as far as we're concerned in the New Democratic Party.

This is, again, a government that refuses to use even the tools at its own disposal. We have a wonderful Ombudsman in the province of Ontario. We want to extend his jurisdiction to the MUSH factor. He wants to extend his jurisdiction. We're the only province in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have oversight over hospitals, and perhaps this lobbyist scandal would have come to light earlier if he had.

Again, that's not good government. That doesn't provide good oversight of government agencies and tax dollars and the way they're spent, and we see the results of this in scandal after scandal after scandal.

'Tis to laugh at the Minister of Health, who acts surprised about lobbyists. Who did she think those men sitting on the other side of her desk were, with the shiny shoes and the briefcases? Who did she think they were? Who did she think were phoning up her office and trying to get appointments, if not lobbyists? Come on.

The people of Ontario are tired of that. They would actually like a government that stood on principle and that told them what was really going on. A government that doesn't is not good government.

Citizenship and immigration: I'm trying to cover my portfolios very quickly. This is a government, that has not made it easier for immigrants in Ontario. Talk to an immigrant in Ontario and find out if their life is what they expected when they came here. Usually, the answer is: No, it's not. This is not good government that's not a government for new immigrants.

It's not a government that provides any housing, despite their screaming and yelling. Most of the money they talk about is federal dollars that they've spent. They promised 20,000 new units of housing in their first term. We got about 4,000 in seven years.

A government that hasn't closed coal-fired plants, on the environmental front; a government that's going nuclear all the way; a government that's broken just about every promise that was made in 2003—none of this adds up to good government. This is not a legacy to be proud of. This is a legacy to be ashamed of. This is not good government.

When we look at this bill, which really is a house-keeping bill that tinkers with many regulations, makes amendments to many laws—which is fine; all governments have to do that—why in the world would they call it a good government bill? This is, for the opposition, like the caged animal and you poke a stick at it. Come on. What are we going to say when they force us to vote on or against a bill that describes the McGuinty government as good government when we know and the people of Ontario know—certainly, the polls show 76% know—that what the McGuinty government has delivered is not good government?

I'll leave it at that. I look forward to the comments.

It's a sad day in Ontario—luckily, a day that will not last much longer, I don't think—a sad day when we're forced to debate a bill with such little content but, luckily, that allows us to talk about an entire history with the McGuinty government, the cabinet's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Questions and comments.

1650

Mr. Bob Delaney: I will remind viewers once again that these types of housekeeping bills that make routine amendments to many acts are normally called good government bills, this being no exception.

Let's talk about the impact on ordinary Ontarians. Let's talk about some real good-government issues. What are your taxes like today? The fact of the matter is that your taxes today are lower than they were on the last day of the Harris-Eves regime. The fact is, your energy system is better, more robust, more diversified today than it was on the last day of the Harris-Eves regime.

What is good government? Is good government having to bring diesel generators into your cities in the hopes that your electricity system, which is bordering on the verge of collapse—that's not good government, but that's the government we replaced.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member should keep within the realm of reality here a little bit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That is not a point of order.

The honourable member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: A blacker pot hath never cast such aspersions upon a kettle.

One of the signature accomplishments of our government is the complete elimination of the most regressive, duplicative, inefficient, stupid taxes in Ontario history, and that's the provincial sales tax. It's gone. It's over. It's history. It's been repealed, abolished. Today, an example of good government is that the cost of doing business in Ontario is falling, and falling fast.

I'm sure others will pick up from where I've left off. I thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was a pleasure listening to the member from the third party speak on this bill that would more appropriately be named the poor government bill, that goes hand in hand with their other bill that they have in front of the House called the no-accountability act.

There's one thing that puzzled me with the member from the third party. She was disappointed because she was expecting to get the government to stand up on principles. I really have to say to the member of the third party, who should know by now, that in order to stand up on anything, you need to have a backbone, and these guys on the Liberal side have no backbone whatsoever. Principles are just one of those other things that they lost with their backbone a long time ago.

Let's put it on the record here: Ontario has a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the country, and Toronto has a higher unemployment rate than Ontario. That's a result of your bad government.

Energy costs: Hydro costs in September alone have gone up 7.7%. Does this bill do anything about that? Absolutely zero. Gas costs have gone up 5.6%—and this we can attribute, of course, to the member's glowing endorsement of the HST.

Energy costs are going up, hydro costs are going up, unemployment is going up, and the member from the Liberal side thinks this is all wonderful.

Let's be honest here. There's nothing about housekeeping in this bill. This bill is about more bureaucracy, more red tape and delegating more authority of this House to the unelected, the unaccountable, so the Liberal Party can hide behind their inaction and their laziness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to my friend from Parkdale–High Park. She speaks with conviction, she speaks well, and she speaks eloquently. She rhymed off a whole litany of things about where she thinks this government has failed, and I have to tell you that I agree with her.

The main problem with this bill is in its title. For a government such as this one to pretend that this is good government and what they are doing in the body of this bill is, as has been said, a bit of an oxymoron. This is a housekeeping bill. This is a bill that probably not one member of this House would have any umbrage had you called it for what it is—housekeeping bill number 436 or something, the much ado about nothing act, or anything else.

There probably would not have even been a speech made here. Nobody really cares what's in the content of the bill; it causes no one any great grief.

I do take some exception, though, to my friend when she said that the government should act on principle. A long time ago, when I was a mayor, and I was at Metro Hall, the person who sat beside me in the adjacent desk was a gentleman by the name of Dennis Fortinos. Dennis was a very good Liberal. One day, he got to talking to me and he asked me, "What do you know about Liberals?" I told him everything I thought I knew about Liberals from textbooks. I grew up in my life knowing about that stuff. He told me I had it all wrong. He said, "If you know this one thing, you'll know everything about Liberals." I listened to him intently, and he said, "We are a party of many principles. If you don't like those, we have others."

I see that almost every day in this House when principles are talked about. So I have to tell my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, if you want to know about Liberal principles, just listen because today there will be one set; the next day, there will be others. They will do them until they know that somebody, somewhere, is satisfied in what is being done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The opposition member from Parkdale–High Park, initially when she started speaking, I was listening to her. She really didn't refer to the bill.

She tried to talk about the economy, and all the challenges that the economy faces in Ontario. If one were just to isolate and listen to her comments, it's only in Ontario. It's only in Ontario; the rest of the world is in this rosy cloud.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Face the facts.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The facts are that there have been some huge economic challenges, but what she's forgetting to tell us, though, and I want to be fair, is that because of the position of Canada, through its banking system and so forth, Canada's one of the more fortunate countries that is ahead of the curve in the recovery, as low as it is. Let me just say—

Mr. Frank Klees: We had nothing to do with that.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Well, we do have something to say. The member opposite seemed to be saying we have nothing to say.

Ontario, out of all of the provinces, is a very industrialized province; it got hit one of the hardest. It's also ahead of the curve when you compare it to the other provinces of Canada.

Mr. Frank Klees: That's not true.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You might not want to believe it. The fact of the matter is those things she's not talking about.

They're saying that prices are skyrocketing in hydro. Yes, rates are going up. What did the opposition do during their legacy here? They froze those hydro rates. That's why we have stranded debt today, because you froze them. You either pay them when it happens, or you pay later with interest. They hid those costs, and we have to face reality today.

Let's not kid ourselves. People do understand that we have to face reality. Either you want to hide things, and somewhere down—like the over \$5-billion deficit that never existed in 2003. The auditor found it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Parkdale–High Park has two minutes for her response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all of those who weighed in on this debate.

I love the line about the principles; I would have used it had my benchmate from Beaches–East York not. Certainly, the Liberal government is famous for standing firmly on all sides of an issue. We saw evidence of that this afternoon in private members' public business.

You know what's sad, really sad, is that this is a majority government. This is an overwhelming majority government. How many political parties have the privilege and the advantage of being an overwhelming majority in any House? They have it. That's the true test of political will. When you have an overwhelming majority, you might as well have an oligarchy. Let's face it: You can do anything you want.

What have they done? What is their legacy? We couldn't have stopped it, whatever they did. What did

they do? They have left Ontario far worse than when they found it. That's what they've done. That is their legacy, and they cannot pawn that legacy off on the world.

Yes, the world suffered a recession, but other jurisdictions took some action around that, did something about it. What have we done here that has shown any significant mark? What has this government left as its legacy economically, for women, for children? Name any file, and what has this government done? I put to you that that's sad because who knows when they'll have that chance again? I think the people of Ontario say not any time soon. That's what the polls are showing, because the people have wisdom, and they finally can see what's actually being delivered. It comes in the mail every month with their hydro bill. A higher cost of living, less opportunity, less hope for the future and a huge deficit—that's what this government calls good government. It's not good, and it's not true government.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: We're talking about Bill 110, with this inappropriate title: An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. It really is an inappropriate title, but I think what we can all agree on in this House—all members of this House can agree—is that more and more of the government's business is being decided and influenced and conducted outside of this Legislature, that the role of members in this House is really being diminished. When that happens, of course, that is not good government.

The members may recall that years ago, a noted British legislator and jurist, Lord Hewart, wrote an interesting book—back in the 1940s, I believe it was—called *The New Despotism*, and in that book he talked about how in the Westminster system, the governments of the day were handing off and delegating their authorities and their influences to others in the bureaucracy and others who were unelected and unaccountable. And really, that's what this Bill 110 does. Bill 110 further diminishes the role of not just the members on the opposition side, but it diminishes the role of the government members as well.

Throughout this bill, you will find reference after reference where—here's one in 271.2 under schedule 5. "The director may make regulations prescribing forms and providing for their use." Now we're handing off the regulatory power, not for the executive, not for cabinet, not for the minister; we're actually handing over regulatory authority to a director. Now, that is not good government when an employee of the ministry, an employee of the bureaucracy, can make regulations. Again, I would think all members would agree with that.

But it's not just once. It happens in a multitude of places in this bill, like 21.3 in schedule 5: "The director appointed under section 278 of the Business Corporations Act may make regulations." Once again, another unelected, unaccountable person, an employee—and really it's becoming just about any employee of the ministries who can make regulations.

I know that all members in this House, and indeed all our constituents, expect and demand that we be aware of what laws are being created that they're going to have to live by. We saw that this summer with the G20 regulation, where another regulation that was passed outside, in secret—nobody knew—had significant ramifications for many people, and even all the members on the opposite side were unaware of what happened.

How do you respond to your constituents when they ask you, the member from Northumberland or the member from Willowdale, "How come you passed that regulation?" and the only thing that you can say in truth is, "I didn't know what happened. Somebody else did it, some director. Some lowly bureaucrat created this law that you have to live by"? That's because the Liberal Party abdicates its authority and transfers its authority onto those others, who aren't here. It is a sad day for all of the Legislature and all of our democracy when we can't stand in front of our constituents and explain how that regulation came to be. This is what this bill does throughout.

Here's another one, under subsection 4(2): "designating officers of the ministry for the purposes of endorsing licences and issuing certificates...." Throughout this bill they're handing off our legislative authority and giving it to the unelected, to the unaccountable. I ask the members: Do you think that is good government? Do you think that is good government when we are not the authors of our own responsibilities?

I had a case this week where I had an owner of a private career college call me up. He sent me a letter, and he asked me to raise a question with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. He wanted to know about this authority that they have that the superintendent of career colleges can shut down a college arbitrarily and ruin a business, disrupt the lives of the students and throw this business into chaos.

What was interesting about that letter from the owner of this private career college was he said, "Don't use my name. Don't use my name, because I don't want to end up like the Niagara-on-the-Lake Culinary School," which was shut down and thrown out of business by the arbitrary actions of a bureaucrat in the MTCU.

Now, isn't that a scary thought for all of us, when our citizens, our business owners, are fearful of their government? Isn't that a scary, atrocious, disgusting way that people feel in this province, because of the actions of the unelected and the unaccountable? And now, under Bill 110, that authority, that arbitrary authority, is going to increase and increase.

We know Ontario now is the most highly regulated province in this confederation and the least performing economy in our confederation. We've gone from the engine to the caboose of Confederation. What is the government's answer to this? "Well, we are going to do more of the same. We are going to put more and more of the authority off to others."

Here's another one, section 24.2: "The director may make regulations...." Throughout this—this is nothing about good government. This is nothing about house-

keeping, as the member from Northumberland suggested. This is not housekeeping. This is dirtying our House, dirtying our Legislative Assembly, because they are neutering and castrating the role and the authority of members of this House, as they keep devolving more and more decision-making over to others.

We've seen the results of this Liberal government: last place in Confederation, highest unemployment rates, high and skyrocketing energy rates, scandals such as eHealth and eHealth 2.0, OLG. We have scandals, spending abuses and increasing costs to business, increasing unemployment. And what is their priority? Their priority is to hand off more of our decision-making to others who are not accountable to anybody in this House.

That's why Lord Hewart called it the growing despotism with that novel, as legislators removed themselves from the decision-making.

1710

I know that members of the third party and members on this side want to stand up and defend our constituents. We want to be able to say to our constituents when they come in, this is why that legislation is there, not that it was some little cobble in the Liberal government who gave the authority to the chief of police to make regulations. The chief of police in Toronto can make regulations, apparently. Every director in these ministries can make regulations, and we won't even know about it. It will just end up in that big, big book of half a million regulations that nobody on the Liberal side has ever looked at or understands what's in there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. I would like to commend the member from Lennox-Addington—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark and Frontenac.

Mr. Michael Prue: —Lanark and Frontenac—that's it; I think that's the longest title in the entire Legislature—for his informed speech. He's always interesting to listen to, and I thank him for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate.

I think we all look, as politicians here in the House, at what's happening in our own communities at various points in time. I can tell you what was happening in Oakville in the early part of this decade. We had auto plants and truck plants closing. We had the Magna budget. We had hospital closures throughout the province. We had crumbling schools in my own community. We had neighbourhood fighting neighbourhood over which school would close and which school would be kept open. We had laid-off nurses. We had a government that preferred to fight teachers as opposed to working with them.

What do we have today? Oakville Ford: thriving—fantastic profits there. We've got the highest rates of post-secondary participation in the world, some of the highest rates right here in this province. We've got full-

day learning for four- and five-year-olds. You didn't mention that. We've got some of the lowest provincial income taxes in the country. I didn't hear that. We've got some of the lowest corporate taxes in the country—didn't hear that. Right in Oakville, what are we doing? Building a brand new hospital with over a billion dollars from the provincial government—didn't get that in 2003 or before. St. Thomas Aquinas high school is almost complete. St. Ignatius of Loyola high school is starting an incredible facelift. An extra lane on the QEW right through Oakville—you guys couldn't do that. Sheridan College is doing fantastic work, leading the world in animation. Graduation rates are up in this province; dropout rates are down.

You couldn't do any of those things, so instead of supporting the Good Government Act, you try to hide. You try to pretend those days never happened, that you weren't fighting with everybody in this province. You forget the protests on the lawn at Queen's Park.

There will be a good government next October; it will be this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's almost humorous to hear the member from Oakville talk about all of these things that they have built. They haven't paid one thin dime on any of the buildings that he has named. What they have done is they have mortgaged the future of people like our pages, our kids and our future for building those assets now. Instead, they have been spendthrifts and have spent all of what has come in over the last seven years of their mandate when times were good. Instead of paying off the debt at that time, what they have done is incur more debt for our children to pay off in the future—not one thin dime of the investments that he talked about. The billion-dollar hospital? He didn't pay for it. We're not paying for it now. Those young people are going to have to pay for it in the future.

Shame on you for creating huge debt for our future generations. You have doubled the debt of the province of Ontario in seven short years. You've taken it from \$130 billion to \$260 billion. They have to pay the interest on that loan. That's going to come out of their health care. That's going to come out of their education in the future.

This is a bad, bad government, and this member doesn't even know it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's late in the day, for sure.

I just wanted to comment on the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. He was talking about regulations. I think for us, the most egregious dusted-off regulation that the government had in its back pocket is the one that was used on the G20 weekend. I just wanted to say for those who are watching—and I know many, many of my constituents were absolutely horrified by what happened here and what this government did on that weekend—we will be debating that and talking about it on Monday, so tune in for that. It'll be an

excellent debate on a regulation dusted off and, quite frankly, one of the worst assaults on democracy since the War Measures Act. Tune in Monday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: There's an old saying about spending like a drunken sailor. The Liberals, unlike the drunken sailor—the drunken sailor knows when he's out of money. These guys just keep spending and spending and spending. They have doubled our debt in their seven years.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Doubled the budget, too.

Mr. Randy Hillier: And doubled the budget. They have been a train wreck on our economy. We understand there's a recession out there, but what they don't understand is that Ontario has performed the worst in that economy through that recession. Other provinces have not become have-not provinces, but Ontario has under their leadership. Their leadership is a world of nannyism, a nanny state, the nanny Premier, the half a million regulations that they have on the books now in this province. Those half a million regulations are killing our economy. They're strangling and suffocating our employers, and these guys keep spending like drunken sailors.

What's their priority? Two weeks ago it was, "Well, maybe we should ban chocolate milk in the classrooms." Last week it was, "Maybe we should ban KFC sandwiches in society." They'll let our economy go down the drain, raise unemployment, raise the cost to the future generations of this province, and they want to talk about chocolate milk and good government.

These guys are a disaster. Seventy-six per cent of the people in this province want change. I'll tell you, watching these guys, I understand—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I listened to the speeches by the members who spoke prior to me about this bill. In fact, this bill is about streamlining the government's regulations and laws, but they were talking about good government and bad government.

I must tell you that the name of this bill should be excellent government because this is an excellent government governing in this province. This government is an excellent government in comparison to previous governments—particularly under the Conservatives, where they closed down schools. They closed down hospitals; we built hospitals. They fired 6,500 nurses; we hired 10,000 nurses. They fired doctors; we hired 2,300 doctors. Now one million more Ontarians have family doctors.

They treated the teachers badly. Our students lost millions of hours of school time. Under the McGuinty government, not one single minute of our students was wasted in schools.

In addition, we have introduced free kindergarten to our kids. That's what we have done for the future of this province.

Under this government, we have allowed the Auditor General to audit every government institution and

agency, while they kept Ontario Hydro and Hydro One away from the Auditor General's audit.

This government is an excellent government, and that's what we have been doing. This bill is about streamlining government regulations and the rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Questions and comments?

1720

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I didn't know that full-time kindergarten in our schools was going to be free. I didn't realize that, all of a sudden, the taxpayer wasn't going to be called upon to pay for yet another program introduced in this province. I love the idea that we could have full-day kindergarten, but I would have introduced that five years ago when I had a budget surplus of \$5 billion.

Instead, what this government did was flush the \$5 billion out the door the last day of the financial year, on March 31, and didn't keep any of the money or pay down the debt as they could have then and made those kinds of investments that are so important and there for the taking. Talk about a lousy government.

Haven't you heard what the people said in the city of Toronto? They're fed up with you guys. They're fed up. They don't believe that you can continue to spend this money and borrow more money every year, year after year. That's what you guys have done. You changed the accounting system in 2005. If you had stuck to the cash basis of accounting, you wouldn't have balanced the budget in any years, save and except perhaps 2004-05, and that was because of the previous government, because we put you in such good stead.

It's unbelievable that these guys are talking about good government. They're bragging about what they've done. They haven't done anything.

Mr. Speaker, you know I sit as the public accounts chairman, and we see this spending wastefulness on a daily basis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further questions and comments? The member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Mr. Michael Prue: Beaches-East York, but historically you're accurate. My predecessor was from Beaches-Woodbine.

I listened to the member from Richmond Hill. I was actually quite surprised when he stood up because I didn't think that was the plan, and from the shocked looks on the colleagues from the other side I think perhaps it was not. But I listened intently and just as I was starting to get into his speech on how good it was, he stopped. I don't think it was much more than one would expect in a two-minute hit, but he started to talk about things—that he's proud of this government, and I think a backbencher should be proud of his government.

He talked about all-day kindergarten, which we in the New Democratic Party support, but the sad thing about the all-day kindergarten is, it is so sporadic. There are so many places in this province where people don't have an opportunity to send their kids to all-day kindergarten.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: As for the member from Northumberland over there, I would remind him, if you ask the people from the ministry, there is not a single all-day kindergarten space in the east part of Toronto. There is none in Beaches-East York. There is not a single place this year or next year where anyone can send their kids.

I do acknowledge that this is a good idea, but the unfolding of this plan is not universal and it is not fair. So if the government wants to talk about being fair, if the government wants to be talking about fair and doing the right thing, then I think the government had an obligation to—because I know that the member who was heckling me, there are eight or 10 schools that are offering that in his riding.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, five; in my riding there's zero. There's zero in the Catholic board; there's zero in the public board. There are none for next year scheduled in either of those, and we're going to have to wait for the year after that to see whether that's a possibility.

I think the member from Richmond Hill ought not to be really proud of the way this is unfolding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: I can't help but rise in support of the eloquent words by my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills. He's passionate; he knows this place. He is in fact the dean of the Legislature.

The member has seen good government in his day, and he knows good government when he sees it. So his condemnation of this bill, with the title of good government, and his condemnation of the conduct of this government should be listened to, because good government is government that stands and makes decisions based on principle, that actually has the ability to announce policy and then implement it.

What we have had from this government, as the member so rightly tells us, is a pronouncement of policy and then a bungling of the implementation; a taxation of people beyond their capacity, and then an abuse of those tax dollars by spending it on people who have no intention of providing public service, but rather to consume it themselves. If members of this government can stand up and take credit for that and call that good government, that, at the end of the day, is the absolute greatest foist on the people of this province that we have ever seen.

The member for Richmond Hill—I was observing him as he began his eloquent speech and then was shut down by his own whip, who said, "You're not allowed to speak." So he had to shut it down, just in time before I'm sure he was himself about to say, "Yes, all-day kindergarten is a good idea, but our people in York region, our boards, were actually stifled because they had no idea how to implement it." They weren't given the funds, they don't have the resources—another example of bad government on the part of this government. Good thing they stopped the member in time, because he would have condemned his own government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Since we are on the topic that the member from Richmond Hill raised, about education, and we are talking about a bill that's called good government but is about a government that we in the New Democratic Party don't think is good government, let me take a couple of seconds just to talk about the educational status of Ontario.

First of all, we are 10th out of 10 in terms of per capita student spending for post-secondary—10th out of 10. We are the worst in Confederation. That's sad.

We still have not fixed the funding formula in our public schools. When I was first elected, in a by-election, I was talking about that. It's still not fixed.

Certainly, if you speak to those who are engaged day-to-day in the educational system, they will complain about the lack of supervision in the lunchrooms and the schoolyards, the lack of social workers, the lack of ESL programming—the list goes on. Education is certainly not better, from the so-called “education Premier.” It is not better.

Do we support full-day learning, the kindergarten program that goes on all day? Yes, we do, but we would also like to see a daycare program, and this is not it. You heard the member from Beaches–East York speak about how sporadically it's being implemented. That's not fair. It's simply not fair. Why should one riding get more than another riding? Is it because the member happens to be on that side of the aisle? Again, not fair.

Yes, I do agree with the member from Newmarket–Aurora. Perhaps if he had gone on, he would have outlined all of this and more, about the inadequacies of our educational system in Ontario under this government's watch.

We wait and we listen for more about the good government bill pointing to a government that's anything but.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Richmond Hill has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: Tell them you can do it. Don't let them stop you.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you.

This bill is all about good government, and this government, as I said in my earlier remarks, is an excellent government. This is a government that has hired doctors in the past seven years, in contrast to the previous government, where they fired doctors. This is the government that hired about 10,000 nurses. The previous government fired 6,500 nurses. This is the government which is building hospitals. The previous government was closing down hospitals. That is the meaning of good government. That is the meaning of excellent government.

1730

This is a government that opened the hands of the Auditor General to audit every government agency, every government department. The previous government separated Ontario Hydro and Hydro One from the Auditor General's jurisdiction. This is the government that

brought in legislation so that the government's books, before the end of the term, are audited by the Auditor General. The previous government basically hid the \$5.6-billion deficit, which we inherited from the previous government.

That is all about good government, and that's what this government has been doing. By bringing in this Bill 110, basically, what the government intends is to streamline the rules and regulation and the laws of this province. That's what we have been doing, and nothing more than that.

It's a straightforward bill, and I hope all the members will vote for this bill. I am rather surprised that the opposition parties, instead of dealing with the bill, have stuck to the name of the bill. That is not fair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Do you have any information about whether or not this bill is going to committee? Has there been any indication from the government in that regard?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I appreciate the question, but it's not a point of order.

Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and the reason that I'm raising this point of order at this point is, I don't want to run out of time. This is very important to me. It relates specifically to standing order 99, the topic of written questions. This is something that I know has been raised on a number of occasions in this House before. Standing order 99 reads as follows:

“(a) Questions seeking information from the ministry relating to the public affairs of the province may be placed by notice on the Orders and Notices paper.

“(b) Such notices shall be dated and, where a member repeats an unanswered question in the ensuing session, the date of the original notice shall be shown.

“(c) In putting any written question, no argument or opinion shall be offered nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain the question.”

I have tabled with the clerk a series of these questions that are very relevant to a number of ministries, and they're relevant because the information that I have requested is important for me to carry on my business and to respond to my constituents.

The standing order is very specific in terms of the responsibility that the ministers of the crown have to respond. I refer you, Speaker, to 99(d), which states as follows:

“The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sessional days, unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming or that he or she declines to answer, in which case a notation shall be made on the Orders and Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made an interim answer, the approximate date that the information will be available, or that the minister has declined to answer, as the case may be.”

The standing orders are very specific in terms of what the obligations are on the part of the minister. It goes on

to say, "The answers to such written questions shall be given to the member who asked the question and to the Clerk of the House who shall print a notation in the Votes and Proceedings that the question has been answered.

"(f) If a minister is of the opinion that any written question under this standing order requires by way of reply any statement of facts, or records, or statistics of a lengthy or a voluminous nature, the minister may require it to be made a motion for a return."

Finally, it says, "No member shall have more than"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'd like to get to the point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Please do.

Mr. Frank Klees: If I could get to the point of my point of order, it is that time and time again, ministers of this government have essentially ignored the timeline requirements for written questions.

I would ask you to undertake to do a review of the number of questions that have been put on the table and report to the House the timelines and the number of questions that are outside the standing order requirements, and in doing so, that you would direct the ministers to comply with the standing orders as they are written for the benefit of members.

Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I give credit to my colleague for raising this issue, because it has been a long-standing issue with this Legislature.

What the members of the opposition have been experiencing with regard to questions of the ministries is answers that are very similar to the kinds of answers we are getting in question period. Prior to perhaps two or three years ago, members of this Legislature could ask a question on the order paper and get a fairly specific response—a response to the actual question. Now, we are getting the same kind of non-answer back from the ministry.

Our only opportunity as members of the opposition is to ask questions during question period, during estimates and on the order paper. My question to you, Mr. Speaker, is: When can we get real answers to questions we have put forward to the government of the day? Is there no obligation on the ministry or on the minister to respond with some kind of definitive answer to the questions we ask? We ask questions that ask for a yes or no response. We ask questions for statistics with regard to a particular ministry, and we get back responses that do not answer the question. Is there no obligation on the minister or the ministry to provide us with clear answers to our written questions?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I get the gist of the point of order—and it is a point of order. I've been informed by the deputy clerk that there are a number of order paper questions that have not been answered within the 24-day period per the standing orders, and I would look to the government if they have any comments on this matter.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I would certainly undertake to expedite the answers. I would say, having been in oppos-

ition, that sometimes when you get an answer, you may not like the answer, but nonetheless it's an answer. I think our ministers are accurate and comprehensive in their responses, but if we are outside the standing orders, I'll encourage our ministers to get the responses in.

Mr. Frank Klees: If I might, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to respond to the minister for a moment. On the same point of order?

Mr. Frank Klees: Yes, the same point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All right. I'll give one more shot.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the government's response to the point of order, and what is disappointing to me—I have a great deal of respect for the honourable member; however, his response did not in any way answer your question and your appeal to the government to respond.

My issue was not the kind of answer I got. My concern, quite frankly, is that time and time again questions are placed on the table and there is absolute disregard on the part of cabinet ministers to respond in accordance with the standing orders in terms of its timing.

I was hoping that what I would hear from the government side is not, "Well, when we were in opposition," and "I empathize with the opposition members." I was hoping that what I would hear is that the message would be taken back to the cabinet table and that cabinet ministers would be implored to, in fact, answer those questions within—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

1740

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Speaker, on the same point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've heard quite a lot on the point of order. Do you have anything new to add?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm just going to ask for a point of clarity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Perhaps, because the table has all the information concerning the questions that are being asked and the ones that are past 24 days of House business, they could provide a list to the government as to the ones that are outstanding and to ensure that those—and you could perhaps let the House know what that list was on the next day of sitting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. I'm sure the table officers would be happy to provide the government with a list. I'm satisfied that the minister without portfolio, Mr. Phillips, has given an undertaking to talk to his colleagues and to get you the responses as soon as possible.

Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I speak to Bill 110. I don't want to use the title of this because its surely a misnomer to say that anything with regard to this government could be a good government act. We have seen over the past number of months and days this government struggle

with the whole concept of governing this province. Who could have imagined the incompetence of a government that would allow the HST and eco fees to hit down on the same day?

I'll give them credit that that wasn't planned. I can't believe anybody who was involved in the political field could possibly say, "We're going to bring down the HST and eco fees on the same day." Where was all of that staff in the Minister of the Environment's office? Where was all that staff in the Premier's office? The Premier's office is not with clean hands here. The Premier's office knows when major announcements, major programs are coming forward. Where were they? What incompetence, with a very basic—perhaps the first lesson you learn in politics is that everybody should know what's happening on a particular day. It's unbelievable that that occurred, and it just shows you how out of touch they are with governing, how many people and staff the Premier's office has gone through, and what disarray they are in at the present time.

My friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington went through this particular bill and dealt with the fact that this bill shovels off more responsibility from the elected officials to the unelected, whether they're a registrar or a director or whatever. This bill takes power out of the hands of the cabinet of Ontario, it takes power out of the hands of ministers of the crown, and gives it to people who are not elected. My friend pointed out what kind of dangers can come from that.

We heard, for instance, in the eco fees fiasco that the government was trying to shuffle this off to the fault of Stewardship Ontario. Well, what do we have here? We have a bill which shuffles off more responsibility to people who are not elected and directly accountable in this Legislative Assembly. This goes on and on.

We have seen this through the creation of the LHINs. It has become quite obvious that the Ministry of Health thought that they could get away from their responsibility in calling the health care policies of our province by shoving this responsibility for making finance decisions out to the LHINs across the province of Ontario. What a disaster that has turned out to be.

Unfortunately, even though they were warned, they didn't change the legislation as to who's ultimately responsible for the hospitals around our province, so in the end the LHINs were supposedly given the responsibility for funding hospitals, but legislatively, the province remained accountable and responsible for how the hospitals were run. You can't have the bucks and the responsibility in two different pockets; therefore, the system has failed because they have not changed the legislation to give responsibility for the hospitals to the LHINs, if that's what they wanted to do. Now, we don't necessarily agree with that—we don't agree with that. We think that government should be responsible for running the hospitals of the province of Ontario.

This bill should have had previous consultations with the opposition parties. When we were in government, Mr. Speaker, you may remember—you were a minister in

that previous government—that when we had what we called housekeeping bills or bills that dealt with minor matters, what we would do is ask each minister to put forward suggestions, and I, as the House leader at that point in time, would go to the opposition parties and say, "Opposition parties, do you agree or disagree with any of these parts of the bill?" And the opposition parties would come back and say, "In general, we agree with 95% of this. We disagree with 5%." Do you know what we would do? We would take the 5% out so that we would gain the co-operation of the Legislative Assembly and we wouldn't be embroiled in a two- or three-day debate.

Now, one of the matters that is dealt with in here has a great interest for myself because it talks about taking the hearings board of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario away from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission and to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. Now, we had decided before we left government, in 2001 and 2002, that this should be done, and I have no objection to it being done. I do have objection to it being done eight years later. What has taken this government so long to deal with this issue? There is a conflict of interest or a conflict of interest that could exist, because the Alcohol and Gaming Commission regulates the alcohol and gaming business, and it's difficult for the public and it's difficult for me, and it shouldn't be in the same house as the people who are making the rules, who are enforcing the rules, to also have the court or the arbitration process.

I agree that they should be separated apart. However, by waiting for seven or eight years, what the government has done is appoint a whole bunch of their people to this board, and they are now going to be faced with the problem of having the Alcohol and Gaming Commission board as it now is and the Licence Appeal Tribunal come together.

We have David Gavsie, a Liberal appointee and a well-known Liberal, making \$175,000 as the chair of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. He has another \$6,600 in benefits, bringing it to over \$180,000 a year. That may be an appropriate salary for somebody who is running an arbitration process and dealing with a whole bunch of matters every month and every day. But when this is transferred over to the licence tribunal, we have Lynda Tanaka, who's earning about \$128,000, running that particular agency. They're going to have to fire one or the other. My question to the government is, are you going to pay severance to the person who goes?

1750

If you leave Mr. Gavsie as chair of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission board, instead of having a daily concern with regard to the arbitration of cases dealing with liquor licence appeals, he's going to have to have a meeting once every three months in an agency board and in a governance board. Are we going to pay Mr. Gavsie over \$180,000 a year to have a meeting once every three months?

All those board members are also permanent members of the board, and I believe most of them receive compensation in excess of \$120,000.

Again, given what happened with regard to their ability to run anything, talking about the eco fees and the HST coming together, are we going to be stuck with tremendous severance fees and nothing better than we have now?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure to listen to the dean of this place, the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

Certainly, going through the bill and its minutiae, I know that our justice critic has spoken about the role of the Attorney General in this bill and had some concerns about that in his role—the Attorney General's, that is—in the hiring of new justices of the peace.

So from this side, in the New Democratic Party, we're not saying that there aren't some issues with the bill itself. Of course, as we've said before, the biggest issue with this bill is the very title of the bill that we've spent so much time on.

At any rate, it was great to hear him.

I look forward to this bill being in committee, when we can go through it clause by clause and line by line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: We've heard a lot about good government these last couple of hours. Let me tell you, just to get it on the record yet again, about some of the things that we've done for good government that this government and I are very proud of.

Unlike the Tories, who closed a number of agencies to freedom-of-information requests, we broadened the scope of freedom-of-information legislation, and that is an exercise in transparency. In particular, we extended freedom-of-information legislation to include Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation in 2003. In 2006, we extended the freedom-of-information provisions to Ontario universities. That is transparent government. That is good government.

We've also worked with the Auditor General and provided the Auditor General with a number of new mandates, and I'm happy to go over a few of them. You will recall the legislation we introduced which said that before each election, the Auditor General has to review and give his opinion on the state of the books of the province, so that the voters going into that election have that independent assessment of what the state of the books is—unlike that fiasco we had going into the 2003 election where the Tories, the proponents of so-called good government, gave the public a statement of what the province's financial condition was which was completely unrealistic; a complete, dare I say, fabrication. That won't happen again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to respond to the comments that have been made by my colleague the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills. As has already been said, he certainly is the dean of this place and he

has, certainly, an appreciation for what good government is all about and some of the initiatives and steps that should be undertaken. I think it scares all of us when we see a bill with a name such as this one, to see that it is such a misnomer, because I think if you take a look at all that has happened since 2003, we're seeing exactly the opposite.

We see a government without any plan. We see a government that has not been transparent and has not been always forthcoming with the public. I think about health, for example. Some years ago, one of the former health ministers promised that there would be a health plan, a health strategy. This happened around the time that the LHINs were created. Supposedly, that provincial plan for health was going to allow people in this province to have a clear idea as to where the government was going to go, but first of all, the government would, of course, have to identify what its objectives were and how they were going to meet the needs of people in the province of Ontario. Well, you know what? To this day, we have never, ever seen a plan.

Also, I would say to you, despite what we might hear about improved access to health care, we're not seeing it. In my community, we've seen a decrease in the number of people who actually have access to family physicians, and that was done by an external agency at home. I was reading today as well about the number of people increasingly in alternative care beds. So, this government has not exhibited good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was particularly interested in the speech of the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills. He gave a number of examples of how this government has failed to manage in what anyone would think was a reasonable way. The example of the eco tax and the HST being presented on the same day is an excellent example. If it was planned that way, then the concept of the government would be that they were trying to sneak in one tax under the cover of the HST. In all seriousness, I'm not sure I could agree that this government would try to do that. I don't think that that would be part of their policy thinking. I don't think that the fourth estate, the newspapers in this place—I don't think they would allow that to happen. And yet, that's what happened. It sounds to me like someone was either asleep at the switch or there was no one at the switch. No one had been assigned to the switch, which again speaks to me as just incompetently bad management.

We're seeing the same thing today with announcements that the Attorney General has made regarding the Cornwall inquiry and the victims of the Cornwall inquiry, in that all of the consultations they've had in that apparently have been with female victim groups, and of course, the Cornwall inquiry deals with male victims. That again sounds to me like total incompetence, that the government isn't on top of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'd like to thank all of the members who responded to my remarks. I want to say at the outset, in looking at a piece of legislation like this, my concern is whether or not the Legislature really understands the guts of the particular legislation that's under consideration. That's because, when you go into these kinds of bills, there are many amendments to various different acts, and those amendments to those acts are very difficult to understand without being put in context.

So we have, for instance—and one of our critics had complained about it—a paragraph dealing with community care access corporations. It says in this act that there are regulations about amalgamations of two or more community care access corporations. We don't really understand, without a briefing and a cross-examination of the officials, how this is actually going to be carried out. I'm not sure that the backbenchers in the

government understand how this is going to be carried out and how it is going to affect their community or my community that I represent.

This forum of debating this on second reading in this very formal atmosphere really doesn't do a very good job of homing in on issues where elected representatives have the opportunity to make their comments and perhaps prevent a problem from arising, when it in fact could be that way.

I'm really sorry that this is being brought to the Legislature in the normal way a major government bill would be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
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Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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